

LIFE IN INDIA;

OR, THE

ENGLISH AT CALCUTTA.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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LIFE IN INDIA.

CHAPTER I.

If misfortune comes, she brings along
The bravest virtues, and so many great
Illustrious spirits have conversed with woe,
Have in her school been taught, as are enough
To consecrate distress, and make ambition
E'en wish the frown, beyond the smile of fortune.

SHAKSPEARE.

It is now time that we should take a retrospective glance at the fate of those friends, of whom we have almost lost sight, since the capture of the *Cumberland*. It will be recollected that the passengers of the captured *Indiaman* were separated by order of Captain Lavardine, commanding the French frigate *Mars*, and that the separation had hardly taken place, when the re-capture of the *Cumberland* by his Britannic Majesty's ship *Bellerophon*, made the painful-

ness of their situation doubly felt by both parties. As the Company's Officers, after the removal of the ladies, were suffered to remain above on their parole, they were, like those on board the frigate, inactive spectators of the event in which they were all so nearly concerned. Upon the approach of a new enemy, the French had taken the precaution to send the seamen of the Cumberland below, and put them in irons. The officers and gentlemen passengers were suffered to remain unarmed in the great cabin, with a guard stationed at the door, who had orders to blow out the brains of the first man who attempted to stir. Nothing but their word of honour, which they had passed, and which to British soldiers is dearer than life, could have prevented them from rushing upon deck, to forward their own liberation, and that of their friends. But that bond was not to be loosed, and however unwillingly, they were forced to remain mere lookers on. Bently instinctively grappled for the hilt of his sword, when he saw the French frigate making sail, cutting off all probability of regaining those on board her.

“The villains,” he exclaimed in bitterness, “the cowardly, treacherous villains, have taken flight and left us, carrying with them those for whom freedom is valuable. O that I could meet that Frenchman—that pirate!” but instantly feeling the vanity of the wish, he rapidly paced his narrow apartment, as if by motion he could escape from the thoughts which tormented him—“But what can I do, unarmed and in prison.” Colonel Howard was too much engrossed by personal feelings of wrath and vexation, to heed those of his friend. Captain Kentledge, wholly occupied in the fate of his own ship, thrust his body out of the port, as far as he could stretch, regardless of the shot which whistled around him, and as the *Bellerophon* poured in a broadside, cried out in a tone of exultation, “That’s it, my lads!” “Well done!” “At them again!” “That will do!” and was quite in an extacy of delight, as the French colours were hauled down from the *Cumberland*, the union-jack hoisted, and he felt himself again a commander,—“Capitally done!” “That will do!” “Old England for ever!” “God save the king!”

As soon as the colours were struck, the French seamen, belonging to the *Mars*, were, by order of Captain Seagrove, sent on board the *Bellephron*, every sail set, and the order given to "chase." But the *Mars* was a fine sailer, and had the advantage of the wind, and was already far enough a-head. The crippled state of the *Cumberland* precluded the possibility of her being useful ; and Captain Kentledge determined to stand on his own course, giving it as his own opinion, that the state of the weather favoured the Frenchman's escape. Bently ran up on deck, and from the maintop strained his sight to watch the issue of a chase upon which the happiness of his life seemed to depend. He was separated from Elizabeth Percy now. What accidents might occur to prevent their ever meeting again ! But the dusk of the evening soon shrouded the ships in as deep a gloom, as the mystery which hung over his future prospects, and though all met in the cuddy at supper, to rejoice over their recent liberation, and drink health to Captain Kentledge upon his re-assumption of command, he did not join them ;

he remained in the main-top, gazing in the direction where the ships had disappeared in the increasing depth of the twilight, until sea and sky, to his anxious and bewildered gaze, seemed no longer separable. The remainder of the voyage to him felt insupportably tedious; he spent much of his time in his own cabin, seldom quitting it, except at meals, or to take the requisite air and exercise. He applied himself to his professional studies with the closest attention, endeavouring to banish the anxiety which preyed upon his heart. But it was impossible for him to forget that Elizabeth Percy was a prisoner in the hands of he knew not whom, and carried he knew not where. Captain Kentledge, when he spoke upon the subject, confidently affirmed, that the Frenchmen would not encumber themselves with so many useless hands, but would undoubtedly land them in the first port they could make; whence, if French, they would be exchanged; or, if English, they could find their way to Calcutta. A ship, which they shortly after fell in with at sea, and which they spoke, informed them that the war

with Nepaul was going briskly forward. Several actions had been fought, in which the British had been routed, and many officers slain. Bently felt as if this information sealed his separation from Elizabeth Percy; he knew that both Colonel Howard and himself would be employed in active service as soon as they reached Calcutta. Colonel Howard was of the same opinion; and though he perceived clearly the state of Bently's feelings, he forbore further notice than urging him to take more air, and devote less of his time to recluse study. He loved Bently as a friend, and respected him as a brother officer, and was not ignorant of his niece's feelings towards him; but in such circumstances, where the chance of meeting for a considerable time was so much against them, if, indeed, it should ever take place, he prudently considered, that hopes the least nourished would be the most easily extinguished. Bently, without coming to an explanation with him, had an intuitive feeling of his opinion, and though they passed many hours together, and spoke without reserve on every other subject, this deli-

cate one was passed over as with mutual consent.

When they reached Madras, Colonel Howard made arrangements with a mercantile house for the requisite pecuniary advances for his nieces ; as he saw with indignation, though he had no power to prevent it, the plunder of their baggage by the enemy's men, after the ladies left the ship.

Arrived in Calcutta, he lost no time in presenting himself to the Governor General, Lord Glenardine, and soliciting an active command against a new and more formidable enemy than the Company had yet had to contend with. He next prepared Mrs. Russell for the reception of his nieces ; and recounted to her the vexations they had experienced, and the losses they had been subjected to, which the latter kindly promised to repair, as far as was in her power, by providing all that was requisite.

Colonel Howard loved his nieces with the fondest affection, and, as he was a widower without children, they stood in the place of daughters to him. As is customary with officers be-

fore going on actual service, he made his will, and devised his whole property to Charlotte and Elizabeth Percy. He wrote affectionate letters to both, and left them in care of Mrs. Russell, to be delivered upon their arrival, which he trusted would be in the course of a few months, as Government had already dispatched a cartel for the exchange of prisoners. Mrs. Russell was the sister of Colonel Howard's late wife; and, though unlike her in many particulars, was regarded by the Colonel with much affection, from her personal resemblance and near affinity to one so justly dear to him. Mrs. Howard had died about twelve months before her husband's embarkation for Europe, while he was "resident" at one of the native courts; and this calamity affected his mind so deeply that his health gave way under it. He had married early in life, when but a lieutenant in the army, and passed thirty years of the utmost felicity with the wife of his choice. Their want of children was, indeed, at first sensibly felt by both; but a sense of duty to the all wise Bestower of so many blessings taught them resignation, and

brought them to acknowledge with grateful hearts that their lot, as it pleased Him to bestow it, was still blessed beyond the common lot of mortals.

Colonel Howard and Bently quickly dispatched the few requisite preparations for joining the army in the field; and as soon as they heard from the Postmaster that "bearers" were laid all along their route, started "dawk"* for that purpose.

Colonel Howard felt an exultation of mind in the near prospect of service, which few other things could bestow. The active duties of life had still some interest for him, though its pleasures had none. Bently, with the enthusiasm of an ardent mind, kindled at the possibility of distinction, and with natural anxiety trembled to leave behind him the object for whose sake distinction was desirable. Her dubious fate at sea—the uncertainty of her arrival—and, even if she had arrived in Calcutta before he left it, the impossibility of making his sentiments known,

* Travelling post.

situated as he was, or seeking to engage her in in his dubious fate.—Mrs. Russell's well-known love of pomp, and her wish to aggrandize all connected with her, rose to torment him. Then the recollection of the sufferings of Elizabeth before the engagement and parting from on board the Cumberland, with the full persuasion of her singleness and purity of heart, repelled all merely worldly considerations, as rendering him unworthy of her. These, and a thousand other contradictory and distracting thoughts, passed through his mind in rapid succession, during the four days and nights which his friend and he travelled without stopping, and almost without getting out of their palanquins, except for a few minutes to stretch their limbs, when they changed bearers. They found their relays of bearers punctually laid at every stage. Nothing delayed their rapid course, though in Bengal, where the rains set in a month sooner than in the upper provinces. The rivers had in many places burst their bunds,* and over-

* Embankments.

flowed the adjacent plains, only leaving visible the tops of the trees which grew on either bank, to indicate the course of the stream; so that their path was attended by great danger, and lay, in many places, through waters so deep that bearers were obliged to raise the palanquin poles upon their heads, to keep the inmates dry. Men with long bamboos in their hands piloted this unpleasant route, and ascertained the soundings step by step as they proceeded. Over head was the pure cloudless vault of heaven, of a deep sparkling blue, which the eye could hardly rest upon. Round the horizon ran that thin white vapour which may be justly called, to borrow an expression of Southey's, "the white intensity of heat." Behind, before, and around them, lay the level plains of Bengal, verdant as Eden in its first bloom; here open in rice cultivation, and there closed to almost impenetrable jungle, by the giant growth of trees whose luxuriance has never been repressed by cold, or curtailed by the human hand. The huts of the natives harmonize well with the dreamy repose of the whole scene. Cattle and

their owners slumber out the hot hours of noon under the umbrageous shade which always surrounds their dwellings. Raised above the rice fields, and covered with rich luxuriance of varied foliage and succulent vegetables, they seem more like natural productions of the soil than the works of man's ingenuity. The newly planted rice fields, inundated by water, reflected from their shining bosom the blue heavens and the green earth; while the sun, in his strength, looked down on this scene of his own entire domination. The lotus floated on every pool, throwing its broad leaves and white flowers like network over the sparkling mirror.

At night, the travellers were supplied with a succession of torch-bearers (two or three for each palanquin), whose immense flambeaux lighted them through wood and through wild, the streams which crossed their way, and more frequently the waters which overflowed it. The noise of the bearers and the flashing of the lights were sufficient to scare away any wild animal that might be prowling around. Fortunately they met with no accident, or any serious interrup-

tion: notwithstanding the heat and the fatigue of their journey, they arrived in good health at the place of their destination, and had hardly time to recruit their strength before Captain Bently was ordered out in command of a small party to reconnoitre the enemy's portion of the first range of ghauts.*

It may not be uninteresting to those who are unacquainted with this scene of warfare, to be told that it rendered the service one of the most arduous which ever engaged the British arms in India. The Valley of Nepaul (inhabited by the Nepaulese and their conquerors the Goorkahs, a fierce and warlike people,) is surrounded, and rendered nearly unapproachable, by several steep ranges of bare precipitous mountains, rearing their heads to heaven. The principal is the Hymalaya range, the highest in the world, white with the snow of ages. The bases of these Nepaul mountains have a strong natural defence in the immense forest of Saul timber, with which they are skirted, and which extends for

* Passes in the mountains.

several hundred miles towards Chittagong and the Burmese empire. In the rainy season, the decaying vegetation in this extended wilderness emits the most noxious exhalations, spreading fever and ague on their wings. Amidst the mountains in these lofty regions, the lordly Ganges, the Indus, and many other rivers, have their source, diverging in different directions to the sea. Hemmed in by their rocky barriers, and confident in their security, the Nepaulese and Goorkahs had been for some years in the habit of making irruptions into the Company's villages, levying taxes, and helping themselves with the strong hand of power to whatever they might stand in need of. They made their inroads and returned by narrow passes in the mountains known only to themselves, and defended at different distances by strong stockades, formed of piles driven into the earth, the interstices of which were filled up with sand, leaving only loopholes for the use of the matchlockmen who defended them, and who were all regularly trained, and capital marksmen. Situated as these stockades were, their defence was easy,

as it was almost impossible to bring artillery to bear upon them. The only roads by which they could be approached lay up the face of steep hills, which they surmounted, and were rendered doubly toilsome and arduous by the large masses of loose rolling stone which the torrents had washed down from the naked precipices above. Walled in on every side, shelter or escape was denied to those who might be unable to stand the fire of the unseen enemy.

A spy who attached himself to their division of the army was appointed to conduct Bently's detachment. He had been useful upon one or two former occasions, and though belonging to a cast of people in whom little confidence is to be placed, upon the present service no doubt was entertained of him. On his return a high bribe awaited him if he conducted the party aright, and, to ensure his good behaviour, he was ordered to lead the way, between two seapoys, who held loaded pistols pointed to his head, in readiness to blow his brains out upon the first appearance of treachery. They marched steadily and in good order for two or three

miles, until they entered a narrow defile, where it was necessary to proceed more slowly. They continued cautiously to advance amidst the low thick jungle by which they were surrounded, until they gained the top of a small eminence, from which their guide led them to expect they should be able, unobserved, to ascertain the enemy's position. They found themselves upon a flat space of a few hundred yards in circumference; the steep path which they had just clambered up behind them, and in front the mountain raising its inaccessible grandeur. On either side the projecting hill on which they stood dipped almost perpendicularly into a narrow ravine, dark with jungle, and echoing to the roar of rushing waters. Before a comment could escape their lips upon the strangeness of their situation, two well-aimed shots levelled to the ground the two sepoy guards who acted as guards to their treacherous conductor. He, with the rapidity of lightning, threw himself upon his side over the bank, and rolled into the thicket below, before one of the numerous shots, which burst in a volley from his deceived followers,

could overtake him. In an instant the jungle swarmed with armed Goorkahs, who rushed forward upon their enemies, cutting and bearing all before them, while their matchlock men concealed behind stones, where they had been carefully planted, swept the ground. Recovered from their surprise, the sepoy rallied, and fought with courage, heightened to desperation by the toil in which they saw themselves caught. The veteran in command fully supported the fame he had earned by the calmness and steadiness which he displayed, and the gallant example he gave. Bently's unceasing activity probably saved him from the aim of the marksmen; though smarting under several sabre cuts, he still flew from one part of the line to the other, exhorting his men not to give ground until they had forced their opponents over the precipice by which they were surrounded. While he was cheering and calling to them to stand firm, a Goorkah sprung forward, making a desperate lunge at him with his tulwar;* but, per-

* Crooked sabre.

ceiving his intention, Bently hastily stepped back to avoid the blow, missed his footing, and rolled from the rock upon which he stood, crashing the branches in his descent. Stunned by his fall, he lay for some time insensible. How long he had continued in that state he could not guess. When he regained his recollection, he heard footsteps near him, and a moment after the voices of several Goorkahs in earnest speech. Their language was to him unintelligible; but from the excited and wrathful sounds which caught his ear, he had no doubt but that they were in pursuit of the stragglers of his own defeated party. Alone and unarmed (for in his fall he had lost his sword and pistols from his sash), to move would have been instant death, even had his wounds permitted him to defend himself or to assist others. But that was far from being the case. The bruises he had received in his fall incapacitated him from raising his right arm; and his wounds bled so profusely, that could he have got upon his feet, he felt he could hardly support himself without assistance.

In his unlooked-for descent he had rolled

down the steep side of the hill which had been the scene of action, until within twenty or five and twenty feet of the bottom, where he arrived at a precipitous descent of rock, over which he suddenly pitched into the centre of a thicket of hill bamboos, which broke the progress of his fall, and probably saved his life. The boughs were so thickly interwoven, and so richly covered with foliage, that they formed a kind of cradle for his support, and a curtain to conceal him. There he lay quiet, hardly daring to draw breath, for fear of attracting attention to his place of refuge; filled with emotions of the most painful kind, as he saw through the branches his enemies in cold blood butcher those of his own party who had made ineffectual efforts to escape. After beating almost every bush, except that which concealed him, to his great relief he heard them one by one drop off. This oversight on their part was probably owing to the unusual way in which he had entered his place of safety. Pitching into the midst of it from above, the long grass and leaves beneath were not disturbed, and bore no trace of living inmate to

attract the keen search of these experienced wanderers of the wilderness. While daylight remained, Bently was afraid to move from his place of concealment, fearing lest the hope of plunder might still detain some straggler near the spot. As day declined he slowly and watchfully crawled from his hiding place, though his wounds and bruises made movement agony. After creeping cautiously for about a quarter of a mile round the base of the hills, frequently stopping to rest, and screening himself as much as he could under the shadow of the trees from the light of the moon, whose bright beams silvered the dark jungle and grey stones by which he was surrounded, he perceived a cave, almost hid by a tall projecting rock, and into it with much difficulty he dragged his weary limbs, and stretched himself upon the earth, utterly unable to proceed a step further. Exhausted by loss of blood, fasting, and fatigue, he sunk into a kind of stupor, which lulled the sense of present pain and future danger. After a time, however, overwrought nature asserted her claim, and he sunk to sleep, disturbed by the fantastic visions which

active fancy presented to his slumbering mind. Dreams are perhaps one of the most just criterions of health of body and mind. Who has not, in the season of health and prosperity, experienced the delightful dreamy visions of bright creative fancy, dipping her wing in the rainbow, and tinging all with her own brilliant hues; filling the slumbering brain with the perfume of flowers, and the ears with the melody of the spheres? And who, when health and happiness have disappeared together, has not in sleep suffered the grievous torments which active imagination, relieved from the power of reason, can inflict?

Bently experienced them in their full force; his mind formed disjointed and harassing pictures of the events of the past day. Now he fought victoriously while Elizabeth Percy approached to crown him with laurel, bright as her own sunny smiles; then the earth yawned, and he sunk from her sight amid the roar of savage beasts, and yell of fiends in human shape. Again, he was in the good ship Cumberland, careering his way over the highest points of the

snow-capped mountains, while Elizabeth Percy in vain called upon him to stop or return. When he awoke, the sun was high, and he felt himself but little refreshed by the disturbed night he had passed. Agonised by his wounds, stiffened by bruises, and faint from the loss of blood, further exertion seemed impossible. The light now shining into his cave, showed him that it was of considerable extent, though there was no appearance of its ever having been trod by human foot. The dread of wild animals who harbour in such places, would probably have prevented any one, in less necessitous circumstances than poor Bently, from seeking that shelter. Hunger and thirst lent their aid to torment him. Without any thing to defend his head from the scorching rays of the sun, (for his hat had shared the same fate as his sword) he knew that madness, more dreadful than the worst death which could overtake him, would be the almost certain consequence of his exposure at that hour. Without was the breathless stillness of intense heat, and within the solitude and silence of the grave. Exhausted by the differ-

ent evils which oppressed him, he felt as if he had already attained his place of sepulture ; and stretching himself again on the hard earth, he endeavoured by divine grace, to bring his mind into a fitting state to meet what now seemed inevitable. Beyond the reach of human aid, unable to assist himself by any exertion of his own, he nevertheless staid his mind upon the Almighty, "without whom not even a sparrow is permitted to fall to the ground," and "who feeds the young ravens when they cry unto him." Life seemed behind and death before him, but in that dread hour divine assistance was still sufficient, and enabled him to look up with humble trust to the gracious God, who giveth all things freely, and upbraideth not; he trusted that He, who had for our sins given up his own dear son to drink the cup of human suffering to its dregs, would open a way to life or smooth the path of death, as his wisdom saw best. While stretched upon the earth in fervent prayer, his eyes, turned upward, involuntarily rested upon what seemed in the shadow of his cavern, a drop of clear water oozing through its

roof. Inspired with fresh hope by the sight, he with great difficulty raised himself to the spot, and found he was not deceived, though the very scanty measure in which the precious fluid was dispensed, made the task even of moistening his parched mouth a lengthened operation. He thanked God earnestly for this drop of water in his uttermost need; and having with his finger moistened his burning lips, he stuffed his pocket handkerchief into the fissure between the rocks, and in about ten minutes collected moisture sufficient, in some degree, to appease the intolerable heat of his mouth; though to allay the thirst which preyed upon his vitals was impossible. This he repeated again and again, until weakness and fatigue forced him to desist; but he still trusted that the powerful arm which had hitherto supported him, would continue to lead him; and though tortured with excruciating thirst, faint from want of sustenance, and stiffened in every limb, he watched the slanting rays of the declining sun, as a signal to creep forth and seek relief from the multiplied miseries of his situation.

His head reeled, and every object swam before his sight, rendering his progress so slow, that the moon began to rise before he had dragged himself round the shoulder of the hill, in which he had passed the night. He often stopped and bent his head to listen with painful eagerness. It seemed as if the very extremity of his wants increased his capability of hearing. At last the wished for sound caught his ear; the rush of a small stream, which leaped in silver threads over the gray rocks, crossed a little woody niche, embayed in the mountains, and ran off in a different direction to that in which he had travelled. The gurgling of the water over the pebbles assumed a distinctness to his ear, of which he had never before been sensible. It seemed the very tongue of solitude; he exerted all his strength to attain the spot, and had no sooner reached a little sandy opening between the bushes, than he lay down and applied his lips to the delicious stream. This was indeed a "river in the wilderness," "a spring of water in the desert;" and only those who have enjoyed the liquid blessing in such circumstances

can truly appreciate poor Bently's feelings. He bathed his fevered hands and burning brow, and endeavoured to wash off the blood which had flowed from a sabre-cut on his temple and clotted his hair. He bent over the stream, inhaling its cooling freshness, even after he had satisfied his thirst, and seemed unwilling to leave it, until the pangs of hunger, and the necessity of seeking shelter, forced him from it. In turning to ascend the little bank, he observed (what had escaped him in the eagerness of his descent, when his eye and all his faculties were fixed upon the water) the fresh prints of a tiger's feet in the sand. Horror almost rooted him to the spot. Defenceless as he was, escape or resistance seemed impossible, should any of these dreadful prowlers meet his path. It was evident what his fate would have been, had he arrived a little sooner. He was well enough acquainted with the habits of these animals to know, that after sunset, when they rouse themselves from their lairs, before roaming the jungles in quest of their prey, they usually seek some opening upon the banks of streams where

they may drink. He leaned for a few minutes against, and concealed himself behind, the large trunk of a tree, which grew near him, while he surveyed critically as far as the shadow would permit it, a little path in a different direction to that by which he came. It seemed more open and regular, and he trusted might possibly lead him to some place of refuge. He cautiously ventured upon it, scarcely daring to draw his breath for fear of arousing some enemy from every bush he passed. The moon rode high in cloudless beauty, shedding her bright beams upon the unconscious earth, and illuminating the darkest recesses of the jungle, as if it was not inhabited by those who wished to shun the light. He had not proceeded above a hundred yards, when the dark coppice by which his path was on the right hand bounded, receded, and opened into a beautiful green, quiet, sequestered dell, in which a fine herd of deer were peaceably grazing in the moonlight. A noble stag, with head raised, and open nostrils, snuffed the wind, as if on the watch to give the alarm in

case of danger. The sight of these timid tenants of the forest, was a further cause of fear. Bently well knew that their quiet haunts were scenes of nightly research to their prowling enemies, the tigers. He quickened his pace as much as his enfeebled state would permit, with the intention of seeking shelter in the opposite hill, could he attain it. With the keen eye of hunger he examined every tree he passed in the hopes of finding something fit for food, but in this he was disappointed; they were mostly hill-bamboo, jungle-thorn, and forest timber, crowned, indeed, with an abundant variety of beautiful flowers, and wreathed with splendid climbing plants, whose blossoms shone in the moonbeams, but nothing of a fruit kind was to be found in his path, and he dared not deviate to the right or to the left. At length, when his strength almost altogether failed him, he perceived a light suddenly to twinkle through the leaves, he almost feared that it would prove but a constellation of fire flies, which had several times before attracted his notice, but on proceeding a few paces further round a little thicket

which projected on his path, he found that the welcome light issued from a solitary native hut, surrounded by a kind of stockade, formed of cut bamboos to keep off the tigers.

CHAPTER II.

We have tales of mountain story,
Of broken bush and rifted tree,
We have tales of war and glory,
Listen, ladies, list to me. OLD SONG.

BENTLY no sooner perceived the hut mentioned in the former chapter, than he resolved to present himself, be it to friend or foe. He had, indeed, no alternative but to die of hunger, or perhaps to be devoured ere the vital spark had fled. The hut was constructed of coarse mats, formed of the strong jungle grass, and thatched with materials of the same kind. He approached the door of its outward defence, and called loudly for admittance, fearing almost that the echoes which repeated the sound of his own voice would betray him. In a few minutes an old woman with a cheragh * in her hand ad-

* A small earthen lamp.

vanced to admit him, but on catching a glimpse of his person started back, almost extinguishing her light in her haste. The spectral appearance which met her sight in such a place, and at such an hour, might have appalled the stoutest nerves. Exhausted by the loss of blood and the intensity of his sufferings, Bently's noble features were almost collapsed to the stiffness of marble. The moonbeams in which he stood made them appear almost as pale. A large wound over his left eyebrow; his torn regimentals, clotted in blood and besmeared with dust, gave him altogether a wild and unearthly appearance. The owner of the hut had no sooner recovered from her first surprise, than with true Hindoo civility, she led him into her dwelling without asking a question, and when she understood the nature of his wants, set before him some goat's milk, and a little boiled rice.

Bently spoke in Hindostanee, and was glad to find it was the language of his hostess; he expressed his wonder at finding a seemingly solitary female in such a situation. The old woman replied, that this hut was the house of her

husband's family, and that it had not been always so lonely, but his relations were gone; that her children had been born in it, that her husband had died in it, and that until the last few months, her son had lived there with her, but he had been killed by the Goorkahs, and she was now left with his only child, a boy of twelve years of age, whose mother had expired upon her husband's funeral pile. Bently, in his turn, recounted something of the disasters which had brought him into his present situation; and thus community of interest was produced, by finding on both sides, that their misfortunes had a common origin. On hearing the conduct of the treacherous guide, she exclaimed: "What was he, the pariah dog, that he dared to bring an English gentleman into such misfortune? he that was not worthy to stand upright before you! may his face be blackened, and the sins of his fathers never forgiven." When, in the progress of his narrative, he mentioned his stop at the little watering-place, his hostess clapped her hands, exclaiming, "baugh,* baugh," as if she

* Tiger.

saw a tiger in the act of springing; she assured him, that no human creature had ever gone to that spot after night-fall, and returned to tell the tale. She recounted various instances within her own recollection, of those who had fallen a prey to those horrid animals. When Bently had satisfied his hunger with as much food as he thought it prudent to take after his long fast, his new found friend washed, and to the best of her abilities dressed his wounds, which were now in an irritated and highly painful condition. She resigned her own charpiea, * while she retreated into the division of the hut in which her grandson slept, and laid herself to rest by him on the floor, first trimming her lamp, and leaving it to burn with her guest through the night. The charpeia was a little four-footed bedstead, without posts or covering, raised about a foot from the ground, the bottom formed of thick soft untwisted rope, weaved over both sides, and warped from head to foot. A small pillow, filled with silk cotton, was the only bedding, as

* Literally four foot.

natives in general lay themselves down to sleep in their clothes, just as they have worn them through the day, only taking off their weighty ornaments, and covering themselves with a cotton sheet, if the weather is hot, or a chintz coverlid, quilted with cotton, if it is cold. A few brazen cooking vessels, some earthen water-pots, and oil jars, a paun box, two or three rattan baskets, and a hookah, composed the whole furniture and moveables of the hut.

Bently followed the example of his entertainer, and disencumbered himself of his sash, sword-belts, and boots. His old friend had by his direction cut off his coat, his wounds rendering it impossible to get rid of it in any other way. His bed was placed across two doors for the benefit of air; and though his accommodations were much superior to what they had been the night before, his rest was not better; and in the morning he found himself so feverish and ill, that it was impossible to think of moving to join the camp. At daybreak the old woman and her boy raised themselves from their slumbers, dressed as they had been the day be-

fore, and proceeded to a little pool of water near their dwelling, to perform their morning ablutions and devotions, before engaging in the business of the day. The classic simplicity of dress peculiar to the Hindoo women, is admirably suited for the study of the sculptor, showing to the greatest advantage their finely turned joints, and elegant action in walking. The dress consists of about five yards and a half of cotton cloth or coloured silk (the latter is generally worn on occasions of ceremony). One end is wrapped twice round the waist, forming a kind of petticoat which reaches down mid-leg. The other is crossed over the chest and shoulders, and descends gracefully from the head, which it serves to veil; leaving the arms perfectly uncovered, save for the ornaments with which they are adorned, according to the taste or wealth of the wearer.

The operations of the toilet, to which every native, above abject poverty, pays great attention, are very simple. A twig from the neem-tree, separating the fibres, forms a tooth-brush always at hand, and the burnt beetel-nut, a bet-

ter dentifrice than is to be found amongst the choicest inventions of Paris. They descended full-dressed into the water, shaking down their long black locks over their shoulders, bathed, repeated their prayers, and finished by washing their clothes, without taking them off. The woman, whose name was Nunnoo, rinsed the end of her drapery, which formed her veil, and throwing it lightly round her, extended it with both hands for a few minutes, as she stood in the sun, until it was dried. She smoothed, oiled, and knotted up her long hair on the back of her head, adjusted her massive silver ear-rings, necklace, armlets, bracelets, and baugles,* and stepped from her bath in dress complete. Her first duty on entering her inclosure, was to sweep and water the ground round the mut, or little domestic altar, upon which the sacred plant the Tulsie is cultivated with the utmost care and veneration by all true Hindoos. The workmanship of this little altar was rude, but the form picturesque. Two bamboos stuck into the earth

* Link chains ; like the scale epaulets of light infantry officers, worn round the ancles.

one on each side, were joined over the altar in form of an arch, from which hung suspended an earthen vessel filled with water, and perforated with small holes, into which straw had been thrust, permitting the water to drop slowly and constantly on the sacred plant below. Her next care was to milk her goats, and lead them out to graze, taking care, however, to secure them with ropes, for fear of their straggling too far. Bently asked if she was not afraid of tigers, but she answered in the usual way, that it was her "distoor" (custom); that all the world did so, and that there were so many deer in the jungle, that the tigers seldom showed themselves in the daylight, as there was an almost open space between her and her next neighbours, and she took care to bring in her flock before sunset.

The hot winds had spent their violence, and as the rains did not succeed them as soon as they usually do, there had been a few days of still intolerable heat. Nature seemed to faint under it; panting for the first rain, and exhausted by the hot winds, which for three months had been blowing with unremitting

fury. Nunnoo did all in her power to render her hut as cool as such a climate would permit, by sprinkling it all over with water. On Bently's complaining of heat and thirst, she took some sugar from a plantain leaf, which served for paper, and sent her boy Gopal to gather fresh limes, from the tree which overshadowed their dwelling. Limes, like plantains, are always in season, and may be procured every day of the year. With them she prepared a grateful and cooling sherbet, at the same time informing her patient, that in a little village near them lived a very learned Brahmin, who understood wounds, and had a great name "for the cures he performed. The whole world is filled with his fame," she observed, "and unless God's order is gone out to stop life, he cures all that come to him. He knows what plants are good and evil; and the days and hours when they should be gathered. This is Bude (Wednesday), a very lucky time to send for him;" and she desired her boy to go and tell this sage, that an English sahib (gentleman) at her house required his attendance.

Though Captain Bently had little respect for native medical skill in general, and was resolved not to submit to their favourite mode of treatment — cauterising, he knew that there were some amongst them who understood the treatment of green wounds, so that he made no objection to her proposal. The boy set off, and returned in about an hour, bringing with him a fine middle-aged looking man, who, with profound salaams, introduced himself, and expressed great concern at finding the gentleman in such a state; but promised speedy amendment, if his directions were followed. The expression of his well-formed regular features, and piercing eyes, was dignified and thoughtful; and was certainly heightened by the large jet black mustachios curling on each side of his face. The action of his head was commanding, and his manners grave and courteous. He prayed that God would restore Captain Bently to health. He had brought a few things, which he conjectured from Gopal's account might be necessary, and proceeded to apply a poultice of neem leaves, to reduce the swelling of his right shoul-

der, which though severely bruised was fortunately not dislocated. He bathed the numerous cuts and wounds, cleansing them from the dust, which irritated and rendered them extremely painful, using cooling leaves to bind them up. From him, Bently learned that the British encampment, which he had left upon his unfortunate rencounter, was only seven or eight coss * distant, and that as soon as his health permitted him to travel, he would be furnished with a dooly † to convey him there. The Goorkahs, elated with the defeat of his party, had decamped with their plunder, thus leaving the road open to him. The doctor was punctual in his attendance, morning and evening; and had the satisfaction to see that the fever left his patient. But several days elapsed before Bently found himself sufficiently recovered to undertake even this short journey, and during those days, he had little amusement save listening to the simple details of old Nunnoo and her boy Gopal. From them he learned, that the straggling in-

* Nearly two miles.

† A kind of native palanquin.

habitants of these insulated hamlets chiefly gained their livelihood, by the honey and wax collected in the forest in immense quantities, particularly the latter, which is a most extensive article of traffic, and may be said to supply all India with candles. The incredible swarms of bees with which the jungle abounds, are sometimes found to be enemies as formidable, and more difficult to contend with, than the tigers. These light winged flying foes carried on their offensive operations in the most annoying manner, and eluded pursuit. With the others it was possible to wage a more equal warfare. The spring-bow, though a simple, proves a very efficient weapon, and is always placed in such situations as the natives from experience knew to be the common resort of wild animals. Gopal was anxious to show Captain Bently a trap of this kind, set at a little distance from the hut, where an old offender was lately killed, who had for some time harassed them, by carrying off the cattle belonging to the villagers. The bow had, at a proper distance, been placed exactly opposite to a little opening, from which the

brindled foe had often been observed to issue into the meadow, where the cattle usually fed. The cord, which upon the slightest pressure drew the bow-string, was extended and fastened in the centre of his path, but was carefully covered up with loose grass and leaves. The wary monster was observed to advance with noiseless, stealthy pace; his head a little bent to listen, and his eye fixed upon his prey, with the terrible earnestness which acts like a magnetic attraction; when, setting his foot upon the string, he drew the bow, and the well-aimed arrow buried itself in his heart; he made one bound before he fell, which sent the cattle scampering with terror, in the utmost confusion, all over the grounds.

When Bently found himself able to endure the motion of the dooly, he took means amply to remunerate his good doctor, and his kind hostess for her motherly care, and set out to join Colonel Howard. His bearers conveyed him by a better and more open path than that into which his treacherous guide had betrayed him; who, he understood from the

bearers, had been discovered lurking in the neighbourhood of the camp, taken, and shot.

Bently reached his friends without accident, and was greeted by all, but particularly by Colonel Howard, as one risen from the dead. A few stragglers had escaped the general fate of his disastrous expedition: one of them reported that he had seen Captain Bently run through the body by a Goorkah, and thrown from the top of the hill. Another bore witness to the massacre which had taken place in the jungle at the bottom of the ravine, where some of the wounded, unable to escape, had vainly sought to conceal themselves. The enemy's decampment was also made known to Colonel Howard upon the same day it took place, and he sent out several men on the following morning to bury, if possible, the body of his slaughtered friend; but, when the party arrived upon the spot, they found that the wolves and jackalls had been there, and left a scene which it is easier to imagine than to describe, and which rendered their mission useless.

Bently eagerly examined all the newspapers

in camp, in hopes of finding some intelligence of the prisoners on board the Mars, but without success. Colonel Howard told him that none had been received.

The setting in of the rains was the signal to desist from all further offensive operations for the present. Numerous attempts had been made to force the ghauts; but, defended as they were by stockades, perched like eagles' nests to look down upon all below, it was found impracticable, and relinquished accordingly. But, though active operations were suspended, the commanding officer sedulously laboured to gain information by which he might effect an entrance into a country which had hitherto resisted all attempts made upon it. At length, by means of the golden key which unlocks all doors, he succeeded in discovering a path which promised the accomplishment of all his wishes; and as soon as the cold weather began to approach, and the rains had dried up, the division under his command received orders to march. At first they were in ignorance of the object proposed, but they soon found that it was to

effect an entrance into the Valley of Nepaul, through the bed of a river whose waters were at that season shrunk to an inconsiderable rivulet, leaving a space on each side, within the towering rock banks through which it seemed to have cut its way. The appearance made by the troops was singularly grand, as they marched up a narrow valley, company after company disappearing through the jaws of the mountains. They had strict orders to proceed with all practicable silence; but it was impossible that the movement of such a body of men could be effected without noise. The guns creaked over the loose rolling stones, and the heavy tread of marching feet echoed from hill to hill, and ran round the mountains like distant thunder. As they proceeded up the bed of the stream, the banks on both sides rose so precipitously over them that a sunbeam hardly reached them, except at the vertical hour of noon, but the heat was intense, as the fresh breezes of heaven were also excluded. Their progress was necessarily slow, obstructed by large stones and steep ledges of rock, through which the pioneers were obliged

to cut a way, that the artillerymen might drag the guns after them. It was impossible for carriage cattle to travel such a route, which occasioned great delay and fatigue to the troops, who were often so overcome with the labour they endured, and the burning heat reflected from the rocks which overhung their path, that one, or at most two miles, was the extent of their progress in a day, though they toiled from day-break until twelve or one at noon. They were also constantly harassed by the reports of their scouts, who affirmed that the Nepaulese were collecting in great force upon the mountains over their heads, and they expected every instant to be assailed with showers of stones, while they were incapable of attacking, resisting, or retreating from enemies so much above them. How the Nepaulese, who were on the alert to seize all advantages, missed this, is a circumstance which has puzzled all concerned. Day after day they dragged on slowly, without seeing a living creature; not even a single bird disturbed the awful solitude of these regions. When they had nearly gained the centre of

their almost subterranean path, a heavy fall of rain caused alarming apprehensions. Every eye was turned with horror upon the river, dreading its rapid and irresistible rise, which would sweep all before it; the precipitous banks on either side precluding the possibility of escape. The lightning gleamed from rock to rock, streaming down in arrowy fury, as if it would scorch up the very waters of the river. The thunder, discharged with the tremendous sharpness of artillery, seeming to shake the solid mountains with its concussion. The troops endeavoured to shelter themselves from the fury of the rain under the projecting rocks, and, as its force increased, crouched into any fissure or cranny they could find to escape loose rolling stones, detached by the violence of the storm from the mountains over head, and thundering down into the bed of the river, to the imminent risk of life and limb. For some hours the fury of the elements presented but a choice of dangers; at length the storm gradually retreated, leaving behind it a sweet, cool, flowing air, cleared of all impurities. The swollen stream rushed by,

carrying its transient increase of waters, and in an hour subsided to its former scanty flow; fortunately the rain was not of sufficient continuance materially to affect its rise. Eight days they contended with all these difficulties; and on the ninth, emerging from their covered way, they found themselves, most unexpectedly, near one of the enemy's strongly stockaded forts, but in a more accessible situation than they had hitherto met with them. The sight was invigorating to men who had so long been compelled to waste their strength on obstacles where courage could avail them nothing. They were surprised to find that they had been peaceably permitted to penetrate so far; and that by a route where their advance could have been so easily cut off by those in possession of the heights, without risk or loss to themselves. The only probable conjecture was, that their movements had been undiscovered. An instant attack was resolved upon, before the enemy should have time to procure a reinforcement; and when, after a stout defence, Colonel Howard's regiment at last carried the stockade, and his men,

flushed with victory, rushed to attack the fort, Bently, cheering his men, led them gallantly to the charge. At that instant a matchlock-man from the fort marked his companion, Lieutenant Harrowby, with such steady aim, that the ball brought him to the ground, and at the same moment a band from the fort, making a desperate sally, forced the sepoys to give ground, and one of the enemy, advancing like a tiger upon the prostrate Lieutenant, would have soon put a period to his sufferings, had not Bently, seeing his defenceless state, darted forward, and with one resistless blow laid his foe prostrate at his feet. He helped Harrowby to rise, confided him to the care of his own havildar,* and, with Colonel Howard, led the men with redoubled fury to the charge at the point of the bayonet. They carried all before them, and soon possessed themselves of the fort, which the enemy evacuated at the opposite side, collecting their broken forces in the first tenable spot they could reach. This day's engagement, though not the last of

* Native serjeant.

the campaign, was in a manner decisive of its success. The guns could now be brought to bear, which before was impossible. Yet the Goorkahs still continued, though without hope, to dispute the progress of the British, until they had actually reached the capital. The impossibility of further resistance then forced these proud mountaineers to accede to the offered terms of peace, and to admit a British resident in their capital, and troops in their country, as security for their good faith; thus concluding a war which records in its annals many bright instances of individual heroism, and disinterested self-devotement. The large force which had composed the different divisions of the army in the field, was ordered into cantonments, and any of the officers wishing to visit the Presidency found no difficulty in obtaining leave of absence for that purpose.

Bently had been wounded in the late engagement, and during the confinement which followed, Colonel Howard spent as much time as his duty would permit by the couch of his suffering friend. In these hours of unreserved

and friendly communication, Bently freely disclosed to him the state of his affections, and solicited his permission to address his niece; the reasons which formerly restrained him were now done away, his warfare was ended, and he was on the point of obtaining his majority. Colonel Howard frankly replied, that, were Elizabeth's consent obtained, few circumstances could give him greater pleasure. He too well knew the value of domestic happiness to put it in competition with the glittering vanities of a heartless world; he felt that while her union with Bently would be securing to his niece the fairest prospect of such a blessing, it would at the same time afford all that is deemed (even in the ordinary acceptance of the word) the comforts of life. He did not conceal from Bently that the state of his mind had not escaped his observation; but, though that was the case, the uncertainty of their profession, so soon to be exercised in active service, rendered him unwilling that Elizabeth should enter into any engagement, even if it accorded with her own inclination. On the other side, their separation might have

continued for an indefinite time, during which any partiality felt by Elizabeth (even if it was so) might have faded in absence, or given place to the admiration with which she was surrounded, and she might have married another. But now circumstances were altered; he did not hear that Elizabeth inclined to bestow the least favour on other claimants; therefore the field was still open to him, and as he had valiantly discharged his duty in the late campaign, he wished him success in that upon which he was going to enter. So saying, he shook Bently cordially by the hand, and left him. Of his intentions in his nieces' favour he did not at present think it requisite to speak; that would remain for after arrangement.

The weight which Colonel Howard's kind concurrence removed from Bently's mind, had a more beneficial effect upon his health than half the prescriptions of his medical attendants; and by the time peace was concluded he found himself sufficiently recovered to travel dawk to Patna, whence he could take boat for Calcutta, and go down speedily and easily with the north-west monsoon.

CHAPTER III.

Anxious to please, they give to get esteem,
Till, seeming blest, they grow to what they seem.

GOLDSMITH.

Miss Panton lived from the time her marriage was fixed in a continued fever of amusement, party succeeding party in constant succession. The numerous friends of Mr. Marriot, who was generally known and much liked, crowded the breakfast and tiffin table, anxious to pay their devoirs to his gay bride. The interval between meals was most agreeably spent in shopping for the endless variety of articles, which all her friends declared were quite indispensable to a person going up the country. Besides choosing furniture, plate, and carriages, with interminable orders to durzees, dress-makers, and jewellers, there were all their different performances to try on as they came out of their hands, and constant consultations to be held in

Mrs. Ponsonby's dressing-room. In short, Miss Panton was so much delighted with every circumstance attending her marriage, that she never doubted but she was so with the marriage itself. Her ideas flowed in such agreeable succession, that she never troubled herself to inquire from what source they proceeded, and, certain it is, whatever the source might be, the flow of her spirits dispensed happiness to Marriot, and gaiety to all around her. He was bewitched by her beauty, and had arrived at the sober age of manhood, when to feel himself the prime mover and author of happiness to a beautiful girl of sixteen was bliss almost beyond expectation. The ready and cheerful assent always given to his different plans for their future establishment, though proceeding from gratified vanity and self-delight, appeared to his magnifying eyes proofs of sweet temper and affection. His happiness depended upon qualities as unreal as the shifting trifles which play in the kaleidoscope, but, multiplied and reflected by her attractions, they showed forms as variable and as fair. True, he was deceived; but the deception was natural

and arose out of the circumstances of the case. Miss Panton commenced by deceiving herself into the idea that she admired the donor, when she only loved the pearls. After this first step, all that followed was in regular progression ; acting and re-acting, until they were both carried forward to the height at which they had now arrived.

On the morning of "the great, the important day," a large party of the friends on both sides were collected at Mr. Ponsonby's to partake of the splendid wedding breakfast. The mistress of the mansion received her guests with the utmost complacency, and with an air which showed how perfectly satisfied she was with her own management in the whole affair. The consumah, too, had done his part to perfection—nothing could exceed the taste and variety of his ornaments but their excellence. His confectionary, like fairy frost-work, glittered in all shapes as light auxiliaries to the cold hump, Westphalia ham, turkey and ortolan pie, flanked by preserved fruits from China, and Manilla jellies, with every thing that usually constitutes the received me-

lange of breakfast, dinner, and supper. The bride appeared bright in smiles, her dark locks curling round her sunny countenance, attired in an elegant morning dress, over which, as the cold weather was commencing, she wore a white satin pelisse and hat, with a Brussels lace veil, which floated like a passing cloud round her beautiful sylph-like figure. Miss Hume, Charlotte and Elizabeth Percy, with Isabella and Caroline Owen, followed as bridesmaids. Captain Bowlow remarked, "that a fairer group had never been collected upon a happier occasion," and was so much pleased with the novelty and elegance of his own discovery, that he took an opportunity to repeat it to each of the parties individually. Miss Owen distributed the favours, taking care not to forget the coachman and sices, who were all furnished with gay tokens of bridal favours to fix upon their turbans, and warn the passing multitude to give way. The Bishop, since his arrival, had fixed the hours before twelve, as alone canonical, to the great discomfiture of the inhabitants of Calcutta, whose climate renders sunset preferable to the flaming

hour of noon. However, there was no choice. Fortescue had, during the morning, made no attempt to converse with Miss Percy as usual; and even when the carriages were announced made no effort to hand her, but, offering his arm to Mrs. Russell, quietly suffered Sir Robert Marshall to pass him and render her that attention; a circumstance which did not escape her observation, and which, in spite of herself, weighed upon her spirits. As the carriage entered the portico of St. John's Church, or the Cathedral, as it had been lately named, Montessor and Sir Robert Marshall were again in waiting; but Fortescue was not there. Charlotte caught a glimpse of his graceful figure, as with Major Melville he was attending upon Mrs. Dundas and Miss Hume; and she drew her veil over her face, to hide the involuntary tear which moistened her cheek as she walked slowly up the aisle with Sir Robert. The clergyman stood ready at the altar, and the ceremony was no sooner performed, and Harriet had received the compliments of the company as "Mrs. Marriot," and taken leave of her young friends, with "a

smile on her lip, and a tear in her eye," than her husband and Mr. Ponsonby handed her into her handsome new barouche, drawn by four fleet Arabs, who spurned the dust from their feet as they flew through the Bazaar to the Chitpore Ghaut, where a fine large pinnace, elegantly fitted up, was waiting to convey the new married pair to their station, with the usual appendages of horse boats, baggage boats, and cook boat.

The bridesmaids returned to spend the day with Mrs. Ponsonby, and cut up the bride's cake in innumerable portions for the innumerable friends of Mr. and Mrs. Marriot. Mrs. Ponsonby was in high spirits, and entered freely into a dissertation with Isabella and Caroline Owen, upon the preparations going forward for the marriage of the latter. There was some anxiety expressed about the difficulty of finding a sufficient quantity of white satin ribbon of proper widths, if ships from Europe did not come in to supply the deficiency created by the late numerous demands.

"O! set your mind, Caroline, at ease upon

that point," returned her sister. "I saw Mr. Fortescue receive a handful of Europe letters as we were coming out of church; so ships must have arrived."

Mrs. Ponsonby remarked, "I think I deserve great credit for my good management in Mrs. Marriot's case: as soon as the marriage was fixed I secured a whole box, before any other person even had a sight of it. I have no idea of a marriage without favours; it passes away like any other common occurrence. It is very well in London to dispense with them, where they have become so common that every citizen may stick them on the bridles of his hack horses; but here it is quite different, and I shall order that my servants wear them on the course this evening, and I think it right that every person who has been present should do the same."

While this interesting discussion was going on at one end of the room, Miss Hume and her two friends were enjoying their own conversation at the other. Major Melville was appointed to the command of Malacca, which, though an honourable and lucrative, was an insulated situ-

ation, and he regretted on his Flora's account the entire absence of female society; but she, like every woman who truly loves, felt that his would be sufficient for her happiness.

The deep-rooted, heartfelt happiness which Miss Hume experienced gave a more than usual seriousness to her whole manner, which superficial observers might have taken for melancholy; but it was a feeling which both her friends would enter into, though from different causes; and the band which held them together seemed more tightly drawn now the time of their separation drew on, and its near approach rendered the society of each other doubly dear. Flora's real happiness was, in its manifestation, as unlike the effervescing gaiety of Miss Panton as the steady flame is to the sparkling crackling blaze of a sky-rocket. Caroline Owen had neither Flora's heart, nor Harriet's animal spirits, consequently her satisfaction exhibited itself in a quiet orderly attention to prescribed forms, and a self-complacent examination of, and congratulation upon, the various advantages she had secured to herself. The entrance of Colo-

nel Courtney and Captain Bowlow, who had returned to tiffin, put a stop for the present to all further confidential conversation between the ladies. Mrs. Ponsonby thanked them for their consideration in coming to help her out with the labours of the day. Captain Bowlow, in his most insinuating manner, "protested that the honour of being in any way useful to Mrs. Ponsonby was one of the greatest pleasures of his life." Colonel Courtney declared, "that Bowlow and himself were the parties obliged, in being admitted to such a select coterie," bowing all round, and drawing a chair near the corner of the couch upon which Elizabeth Percy was seated.

Colonel Courtney had certainly advanced a few years further in life than Mr. Marriot, yet the success of the latter acted as a stimulus to his hopes, and he was earnestly expressing to Elizabeth his pleasure in his friend Marriot's prospect of happiness, when his chaprassy entered, and put a chit * into his hand, which, he said, required a jewab.† After asking permis-

* Note.

† Answer.

not hesitate to launch out on every individual exhibition of it. She was, in the ordinary sense of the word, a mere fashionable woman, and liked to know that other people thought her so. He complimented her dress, her furniture, her servants, in short, every thing that was *hers* — the little magic word, which gave such value to things as insignificant as herself; and when after tiffin he had taken his departure, Mrs. Ponsonby declared that “Bowlow was one of the most pleasant creatures of her acquaintance.” His agreeable flatteries had detained them so long at table, that before going out to ride there was little time for repose; however, Miss Owen threw herself upon a couch in what had been Miss Panton’s dressing-room, and, taking a novel from under her pillow, composed herself to rest. Her sister followed her example, at the same time ordering her ayah to champoo* her feet, and another to take a punkah† and keep off the musquitoes. Mrs. Ponsonby had returned to her own apartments, and the Miss

* Rub and pinch.

† Feather fan.

Percys and Miss Hume were at liberty to enjoy their own walk and talk in the verandah, until the carriages were announced. Mrs. Ponsonby took the Miss Owens, and Flora had her aunt's landeau for herself and friends, Mrs. Dundas having left it in town for her use when she went down in the morning, as she meant to come up in her husband's palanquin carriage.

The Miss Percys and Flora would willingly have turned their horses' heads into a more retired direction than the course, preferring their own conversation, without interruption, to the stately pleasure of returning inclinations of the head to the thousand bows they should meet with. Mrs. Ponsonby, however, was of a different opinion, and seemed to think that being detected on any other road at that hour was actual degradation. As soon as the carriages entered upon it, her horses of themselves fell into the usual measured walk, turning and returning at the exact boundary of the fashionable promenade. Mr. Richly and Captain Bowlow, who now rode up, walked their horses on each side of Mrs. Ponsonby's carriage, and drew up by it when she

ordered her coachman to stop opposite the Fort, where the band of an European regiment now in garrison were performing for the entertainment of the company assembled. Mrs. Ponsonby declared that she was excessively fond of music, and verified her assertion by talking without intermission to every one around her. Half her friends, upon distinguishing her favours, rode up in succession to congratulate her upon the events of the morning. The moon had risen brightly, and threw her mellow light over the gay group assembled in her beams. Mrs. Dundas's carriage drew up a little behind Mrs. Ponsonby's. The band were performing with taste equal to the composition Mozart's beautiful air "Forget me not." Elizabeth Percy leaned over the side of the carriage to catch the delightful sounds; her mind, tranquillized by the scene, gradually disengaged itself from surrounding objects, and in the clear light of memory retraced former times. Every note brought a vivid impression along with it, and she could almost fancy that she heard again the distinct articulation of words treasured by memory,

when she was suddenly startled by hearing her own name actually pronounced by a voice which she could not mistake, and which thrilled to her heart. She looked up, and found that her ear had not deceived her. It was Bently. He stood close by her, and the moonbeams which fell on his speaking countenance showed the rapture which sparkled in his dark eye, as he seized with transport the trembling hand which was held out to him, and listened to the faint voice which expressed her pleasure at seeing him recovered from the wounds which the public prints had mentioned his having received.

Flora and Charlotte now took part in the recognition, and expressed undisguised satisfaction at thus seeing Captain Bently restored to health and his friends. "I assure you, Captain Bently," said Flora, "we watched as anxiously for the news of your successful entry into Nepal, as ever distressed damsels did of yore for tidings of the gallant knight who was to deliver them from captivity."

Elizabeth felt thankful that the shadow in which she sat concealed the emotion which she

in vain tried to suppress. Charlotte inquired for her uncle, and how Captain Bently had made his appearance in such an unexpected place and manner. In answer to her questions, he replied, that "he had left Colonel Howard in perfect health, and that he was the bearer of letters which he would have the pleasure to deliver as soon as possible; that he had that day arrived at his friend Colonel Courtney's." "Then," added Flora, "we are to have the pleasure of your company at Mrs. Ponsonby's party this evening."

"I shall do myself that honor, Miss Hume."

Colonel Courtney made his way to the opposite side of the carriage. "I did not know, ladies," he observed, "that my friend from the jungles was a shipmate of yours, else I would have mentioned his name when I received his note." Elizabeth again felt thankful for having escaped such an intimation at such a time. "But," continued the Colonel, "when I told him of the company I had left, and to which he was invited, I soon found that it would require little eloquence upon my part to persuade him

to accompany me; and, indeed, poor fellow, who can blame him, rustivating in the jungles as he has been? Would you believe, Miss Percy, that I once passed three years of my life without seeing a single European lady? Oh! I remember it with horror!"

During the Colonel's speech Captain Bently explained to Elizabeth, that as soon as he understood from Courtney that by accepting Mrs. Ponsonby's polite invitation, he should see her, he resolved, if possible, to anticipate the meeting by coming on the course, where he was told Mrs. Ponsonby would certainly be, as he felt that he had hardly courage to meet her for the first time in a large party, and that he did not possess self-denial enough to delay it until another day.

This communication only reached the ear for which it was intended. Flora was attending to the Colonel's lively remarks, and though Charlotte's ear was occupied with them, her eye wandered round the circle, clearly relieved by the moonlight, and at last rested upon a figure standing a little apart with folded arms and drooping

head; though he wore a bridal favour, he seemed like a person bending over the grave of his buried hopes.

That day Europe ships had come in, and many English letters had been delivered; had Fortescue received any to distress him? was the question which presented itself to Charlotte's mind, as she returned incoherent answers to the remarks Colonel Courtney was making upon the music. The music ceased; and as the carriages were moving off the ground, Fortescue walked across the glacis of the fort towards the river, making signs to his sice to lead his curricule round by the carriage road to the esplanade walk; a well kept promenade, under a double row of trees, along the bank of the river, the general resort of those determined pedestrians who prefer the use of their own limbs to that of their horses, and of invalids, who, too delicate to bear the motion of a carriage, enjoy the the cool air off the river as they are gently carried backwards and forwards in their *toujous*.*

* An open seat like the body of a gig, carried upon men's shoulders with poles.

There is yet a more numerous class than either of the two former by which it is frequented; those who having no wheeled conveyance, cannot mix with the gay throng upon the course, and are therefore contented to be set down by their bearers at the entrance of the esplanade, where they go out to walk, enjoying the double recreation of exercise and conversation. As the place is especially intended for pedestrians, sentries are placed at each end to prevent the intrusion of equestrians, or wheeled carriages of any kind. Here Fortescue lounged, forgetful of time. Both Colonel Courtney and Captain Bently accompanied the ladies in their return, until the carriage turned in at Mrs. Ponsonby's gate, so that the conversation was general. Colonel Courtney pointed out to their observation some brilliant fireworks, which the natives were playing off; an amusement in which they take exceeding delight, and which forms part of all their rejoicings civil and religious. Charlotte followed with her eye the shooting meteors which sparkled along the deep blue vault; spangling their airy course with brilliant co-

ruscations until, suddenly bursting, they sank in darkness. Such, she silently thought, is the unsubstantial dream by which I willingly suffer myself to be misled, and such will be its conclusion.

On entering the house, Flora informed Mrs. Ponsonby, who had just alighted before them, "that they had seen Colonel Courtney and his friend, who proves to be an old ship acquaintance," adding, "he has a common interest in this evening's festivity, and has arrived most opportunely to celebrate it."

Mrs. Ponsonby received the information without comment, only saying, "That music captivated me, and we have staid out so late, that if I do not make haste in dressing, my friends will have arrived before I am ready to receive them." And she walked up to her brilliantly lighted dressing-room.

There was no time to be lost. Elizabeth in vain endeavoured to arrange her dress to her satisfaction; her very eagerness seemed to defeat its own intention. Flora and her sister interchanged smiles as they observed the unwonted

anxiety of her exertions, but unwilling to increase the evident agitation of her spirits, forbore remark. Her cheeks glowed, her eyes beamed, and a sparkling lustre seem diffused over her whole appearance, unlike the general placid serenity of her manners. The certainty that she was beloved, and the dread of hearing the confirmation of all her hopes, chased each other over her mind, mantling her cheek, and filling her brilliant eye with tears.

The sight of her sister's happiness almost relieved Charlotte from the weight which depressed her own spirits; and Flora, possessing more firmness of character, though not less tenderness than Elizabeth, spoke of her own concerns, with the view of engaging both sisters, and giving them time to collect their scattered spirits.

Her kind intention succeeded to her wishes: warmly attached to her, they entered sincerely into her feelings, and thus brought their own into a fitter train for joining the gay assembly now collecting in the drawing-rooms. Every eye was turned upon the beautiful trio as they

entered, and Mrs. Russell heard with pleasure the expressions of admiration which escaped from her friends as the Miss Percys advanced towards her. Bently handed Elizabeth to her chair, and seating himself by her, began in a general way to detail all that had occurred since the re-capture of the Cumberland. Their conversation, though delightful to themselves, was too general to attract the notice of lookers on.

Colonel Courtney, standing behind Mrs. Ponsonby's chair, was relating to her his surprise at finding his friend Bently, whom he had considered a perfect stranger, so well known to many of the company present. Mrs. Russell listened to an eloquent dissertation of Mr. Montague's upon the different styles of female beauty, which he illustrated by observations upon some of the party assembled. "I would take Miss Percy," he proceeded, "as a model of Grecian beauty: the classical cast of her features and tournure of head, with the air of taste, feeling, and elegance diffused over her whole person, approaches as near the beau ideal as anything earthly can do. Miss Hume has

the commanding, and, if I may be allowed the expression, the more robust graces of the North; the clear and independent emanation of vigour of body and integrity of mind. How open and candid is her calm, fair forehead, and how speaking and affectionate the steady beam of her deep blue eye! Miss Elizabeth Percy is English, wholly English; a true personification of feminine loveliness and domestic grace."

Mr. Montague had been for the last thirty years considered as an oracle of taste and refinement, and his approbation was as letters patent, which entitled the possessor to a fixed rank in the gallery of beauty. Mrs. Russell knew that upon her first arrival he had pronounced her to be an elegant woman, which was of itself sufficient to establish her claims, even had her pretensions been less just than they actually were, and undoubtedly confirmed her opinion of his taste.

Mr. Ponsonby went round the circle of his fair guests, and paid such attentions as became the president of the jockey club. "Surely, Mrs. Russell," he exclaimed, after first asking Miss

Percy if she was going to the races, and being astonished at her indifference upon the subject, "you will certainly attend the races, which take place next week, and show the Miss Percys some of the best sport in India. My Sir Peter Teazle is matched against Montessor's Rough Robin for two hundred gold mohrs,* and the bets are immense. We shall have glorious sport. I wish with all my heart that Wildfire Jack had arrived in time to be entered, but I only got him out of the ship last night. You have seen him, Montessor? A perfect beauty!" And he launched forth in his praises. Wildfire Jack's points were, however, interrupted by a servant's presenting a note, which, on looking over, he handed to his wife, saying, "An excuse from Fortescue — ill, he says."

"Very extraordinary," said Mrs. Ponsonby; "I think I saw him out this evening."

"I do not know what has overtaken Fortescue lately," said Mr. Montessor, "but I never saw any man more changed — he actually shuns the

* Equal to two pounds sterling.

society of his friends. Melville, you, who see more of him than any one else, can perhaps tell us the reason?"

"I fear," said Major Melville, raising his head from a portfolio of views in the Eastern Islands, which he had been showing to Miss Hume and Mrs. Dundas, "I fear that ill health prevents my friend from enjoying society as much as he has done. Few persons can delight more in agreeable society than Fortescue, and few people are more qualified to render society delightful."

"Well, then, if that is the case," continued Montessor, "I should suppose that there is something more than mere headache the matter with him. If I had ever known Fortescue to fall in love, I should suppose something of that kind had happened to him now. But Marmion tripped with me yesterday for the first time in his life; and why should not Fortescue fall in love?" A query indeed it was impossible to answer, especially upon such an analogy; but Major Melville, like a skilful manœuverer, not finding it easy to solve the question, answered

by proposing another, which served his purpose, by diverting the attention of the many listeners who were now attracted from his friend's affairs to Marmion's misdemeanour, and carrying the narrator far from his first subject of inquiry. At the commencement of this interrogation, Miss Hume called Miss Percy to look at a fine view of Molacca, in which she pointed out the Commandant's residence. This examination and Marmion's exploits together, occupied all parties until the consumah, making his salaams, announced dinner.

Mr. Ponsonby was a professor of the gastro-nomic art, and was as particular in the arrangement of his kitchen, as he was of his stable. He kept a French, an English, and a Hindostanee* cook, who produced pillaus, rhawaabs, and every variety of curry, innumerable as they are, equalling in richness and flavour that costly dish of the Mussulmahn princes. Nothing could come up to the performance of the sirdar bowberjee,† but the delight of his master, and his

* Mussulmans are always reckoned the best cooks in India.

† Head cook.

own fraternity, when they met to enjoy it. Mr. Ponsonby fed his own mutton, made his own butter, reared his own fowls and vegetables; in short, as everybody allowed, "he understood how to make himself comfortable." His servants were all in as good training as his running horses. He got his coffee in the Arab ships from Mocha, his tea direct from China, his Madeira from the Island, and the rest of his wines from one of the first houses in London. He lived in the world and for the world. His excellent appointment enabled him to command most of the things which are usually called its comforts or its luxuries, according to the taste of the speaker.

One large dinner-party is so like another that description is superfluous. However *spirituelle* the parties may be, it is wonderful what a general resemblance pervades all dinner-table conversation, and mortifying to think how much it depends on good cheer, and I shall spare it to the reader; as also the minute detail of a question which had fallen under the cognizance of the Jockey Club at their last meeting, Ante-

lope against Blacklegs, with which Mr. Ponsonby entertained Lady Westhorn during the intervals of helping and taking wine with his guests. Elizabeth was seated between Bently and her constant attendant Colonel Courtney, who contrived to engross so much of her attention that it was not until after the cloth was removed, and his hookah brought to him, that she was able to listen to Bently, or give him an account of her imprisonment on board the Mars. The length of time passed at table after dinner, which to her used to be intolerable, to-night fled unheeded, and she could hardly credit the French clock in the drawing-room, which pointed past eleven as she came up. Music was proposed, and Isabella Owen had an opportunity of exhibiting her really excellent performance; for Mrs. Ponsonby, though without taste to relish, or industry to acquire any knowledge of the science, was much too fashionable to be unprovided with instruments of all kinds. She had adopted the native idea, that those who can afford to hire others to provide amusement need not take that trouble themselves, and acted

upon it in everything but dancing, which she was by no means willing should be performed for her by proxy.

Miss Owen finished her brilliant concerto amid the usual exclamations, "What taste!" "Wonderful execution!" "Charming!" "Delightful!"

"Do, Miss Percy," said Mrs. Russell, "oblige us with that lovely duet which you sang with your sister last night. I know Elizabeth will sing when I ask her, though it is not what she often does in public."

The same request was softly urged by Bently, who prevailed; the delight of obliging him was of itself sufficient to overbalance the dislike to sing in company. "Permit me, Miss Percy," said Sir Robert Marshall, and he took her hand and led her to the harp, which he drew forward and adjusted for her, and turned over a pile of red morocco books on a gilt stand, to find the song in question, which he placed upon the music-frame, near which Bently had stationed himself to be ready in turning the leaves.

A shade hung upon Charlotte's lovely form,

as she bent over the harp, and struck a few trembling cords, but as she proceeded her voice flowed forth in a rich stream, and waked the soul of harmony. Elizabeth's liquid sweetness of tone fell like balm upon the ear; again they mingled and ascended in notes "of linked sweetness long drawn out." When the song ceased a general pause followed, as if all felt their own voices unworthy to succeed to such sounds, until Captain Bowlow, willing to say something agreeable to Mrs. Ponsonby, remarked that "the conclusion was worthy the commencement of such an auspicious day."

"May we see many such amongst us!" echoed Colonel Courtney, as he advanced to hand Mrs. Russell to her carriage, which was now announced, and the party separated.

CHAPTER IV.

With thee conversing I forget all time ;
All seasons, and their change, all please alike.

PARADISE LOST.

THE day upon which Mrs. Dundas had invited her friends to dine with her at the gardens, happened to be that immediately after Miss Panton's marriage ; and Mr. Russell proposed to his lady, that they should take that opportunity of showing the Miss Percys the Botanical Gardens ; one of the few sights to be seen by strangers. " I think, my dear," said he, " if it will not fatigue you too much, that we can tiff at the usual hour, and set out immediately after ; we shall then have time enough before dark to see all that is to be seen. The weather is cool, we shall have moonlight returning, and the Mahomedan illumination for the last night of the Dowally."

" I think, Russell, you have made a charming

arrangement; we can ask those of our friends who are going to Dundas, for tiffin here, and when we reach the gardens, our friends there will also go with us."

"Always kind and considerate for others," said Mr. Russell, with a placid smile; "but I must take care of you. I shall send off your tonjon and bearers, with abundance of chattahs, to be in waiting in the garden when you arrive. I know that you are quite unequal to the fatigue of walking; and though Miss Percy and Miss Elizabeth like it, they will require chattahs to defend them from the sun."

All the ladies returned thanks for the intended attention to their comfort, and the proceedings closed.

Bently, with delight, availed himself of Mrs. Russell's invitation to make one of the number, when he called in the morning to present the letters of his friend Colonel Howard. Fortescue was also asked, but, as usual, a previous engagement to spend the day at Dr. Dundas's, was pleaded as his excuse. However, Colonel Courtney, Mr. Montessor, and Sir Robert

Marshall, were in willing attendance. As soon as tiffin was over, the carriages were ordered, and all set forth. They turned up the cross-road opposite the fort, where they had a fine panoramic view of Calcutta on the right; Chouringhee on the left; with Fort William, the river, and shipping in front. Clear deep purple clouds upon the horizon, gave a brilliant relief to the white pillared buildings which were before them, bringing them out with almost animated individuality. Slanting sunbeams fell in lines across the grassy plain, brightly tinging the top of some tall cocoa-nuts; or fringing with gold the clumps of bamboos, as they reared their feathery sprays in the air, and closed in the distance, marked by the thin silvery vapour running along the ground, which indicates the presence of the cold weather. As they proceeded on the race-ground, they found the road thronged by the white-robed sons of the needle; Durzees, in hundreds, returning from their daily labour in Calcutta to their own villages round Garden reach; and Sices leading out their horses to air, every one holding his paro-

quet upon his finger, and industriously teaching the birds, with true Mahomedan piety, to repeat their prayers.

There are those who travel and find it barren, all from "Dan to Beersheba;" and there are those who find never-failing objects of interest in every change of atmosphere, in every variation of landscape, and, above all, in every variety of the human race.

The first see nothing in Bengal but a dead flat. Cities, "which are not in the least like London," and "people, that the world neither knows nor cares anything about." The last, even in a ride to the gardens, find enough to exercise reason and to feed imagination. A drive of five miles brought our party to the Ghaut by Dr. Dundas's house, where they were immediately joined by his family and guests; and as his boat was hardly sufficient for the accommodation of so large a party, the superintendent's *boleau** was also in waiting. The dandies knew their business, and soon landed our friends

* A boat with a nice cabin, with Venetian blinds all round.

on the steps below the superintendant's house, where Mr. Rose in person waited to do the honours; and then he led them under a flowery arcade of climbing plants to his beautiful residence. Mrs. Russell found her tonjon and bearers all ready, and in it she proceeded at a gentle pace; while her husband and Mr. Rose walked by her, anxious to show what he called his Nepaul mountains, while daylight lasted. These miniatures he had constructed of brick-stones, brought by the ships for ballast, and whatever else he could find fit for his purpose, even the bones of alligators, as Bengal does not produce a stone of any kind, not even a pebble as large as a nut. The soil is either stiff clay or light sand, but by skilful management and intermixture, it forms good garden ground; as these little mounts covered with hill plants could bear witness. While the rest of the party divided themselves into different groups and walked on, Captain Bently contrived to detain Elizabeth, to show her a genuine sweet briar from England, and seized the opportunity to open his heart before her. He assured her,

that he would not have ventured to do so, unless sanctioned by Colonel Howard; and he pressed her with manly eloquence to tell him his fate, which she must have been sensible had from their first meeting depended upon her; without speaking, she extended her hand, but that mute action conveyed more than words, and amply repaid all his toils and sufferings.

In hearing mutual explanations, time flew unheeded; until they were roused by the voice of Mr. Rose, telling them that he had been waiting for the last half hour, and adding, as he drew near, "I think, Miss Percy, from the uncommon animation of my friend Bently, he must be lecturing to your sister upon botany. Nothing exhilarates the spirits so much, particularly when you have attentive pupils; and you observe how industriously Miss Elizabeth is examining that passion-flower."

"Really, Elizabeth," said her sister, willing to change the conversation, "though you have a fine view here through the leafy arcades of this magnificent Banian, you have lost much by not seeing the Alps, and the lakes at their feet,

adorned, as they are, by the wide flowering lotus of the Ganges and the Nile."

"And rich," added Mrs. Russell, whose ton-jon now came up, "in the vegetable treasures of every clime, from our own modest and humble violet, which I have never seen in India before, to the aloe of a hundred years."

The sun had been set some time, and its disappearance followed by a few minutes of soft clear twilight, which was soon lost in the moon's effulgent beams, as she rode brightening in her beauty, through the dark blue depths of ether, shining with stars which no cloud obscured. The season had its influence upon all, according to their different characters and feelings. Bently hardly felt the earth he trod upon. Elizabeth seemed to him like the planet over head, mildly and beautifully shedding light around her.

Fortescue, for the first time during the evening, drew near Charlotte, as if impelled by the wish to take part with her in the general satisfaction, which silently, but perceptibly, extended its circle; but checking himself, as if he felt that he was about to take a privilege which did not

belong to him, he walked by her side in silence. Sir Robert Marshall, eloquent upon the beauty of the night and loveliness of the scene, quoted all the poets, ancient and modern, and appealed to Miss Percy for the truth of their descriptions. We may "bless the useful light which guides us to our boats, though it could have been seldom less wanted than this night."

A moment before getting in, the whole party lingered upon the steps to observe the banks of the river where they were unoccupied by European houses. It was the last night of the Dowally, the great Mussulman fête, after their month's fast of the Ramazan, and the river, according to custom, was covered with thousands of floating lights carried gently down by the current of the stream, while the edge was in many places marked out by lines of little lamps, and the mosques and trees, wherever there were native huts, were brilliantly illuminated. Coloured paper lanterns, suspended from tall bamboos, floated over the dark jungle, from which long processions issued in different directions, brilliant in the light of flashing flambeaux, reflected from

the talc palaces, which, by means of long poles, were borne on men's shoulders. These glittering edifices, reared to a great height, ornamented with foil of every colour, and lighted by scores of lanterns of the same materials, were surrounded by shouting multitudes, with their usual discordant Bengalee accompaniments of tomtoms and conches. Perhaps there is no city in the world which gives so much employment as Calcutta to those who subsist by the manufacture of what the natives term, "Deckna ke cheese,"—things to look at.

When the events of this evening were communicated by Charlotte to Mrs. Russell, her surprise and vexation were so great, as for a moment to make her forget her accustomed urbanity, and she inquired, in a voice somewhat quicker and sharper than she ever permitted herself to use, "What can be your sister's inducement, Miss Percy, to act as she does? or what can be Colonel Howard's, to authorise it?"

"My sister," replied Miss Percy, "is much attached to Captain Bently, and my uncle respects and esteems him so highly, that he is con-

vinced that he is promoting the happiness of both parties." "I am surprised, Charlotte, to hear you talk in this way, or justify Elizabeth," rejoined Mrs. Russell. "Love in men is natural and proper; it is an homage which every handsome woman has a right to expect; but that she should be so weak as to think of returning it, does not, I own, coincide with my ideas of strict propriety; grace and talents were given to women that they might establish themselves in a situation where these gifts might be felt and appreciated." "And that, my dear Mrs. Russell," said Miss Percy, "Elizabeth has secured to herself." "You mistake me, Charlotte," returned Mrs. Russell; "a husband's approbation or admiration is very well, very proper, but it is not all; who thinks of always keeping fine jewels locked up in a box? the owner himself would soon forget their value, but he remembers it when they are admired and coveted by all who see them. Jewels of the first lustre must be well set, and advantageously placed, to be estimated as they ought to be. A woman of delicacy and knowledge of the world"—Charlotte smiled at

the conjunction—"will, never let such a folly as love make her forget herself, and what the world expects of her; at all events, a reasonable woman could never prefer a mere competence with any man on earth, to rank, fortune, and consideration in society; and these, from Elizabeth's beauty and connexions, I know to be within her reach."

Mrs. Russell said no more, but, in her own mind she pitied the ignorance that could lead to such a choice, and felt that youth, beauty, and accomplishments, were thrown away upon a girl who could bestow them upon a Captain in the army, and be contented to inhabit the jungles, live in a bungalow, and ride in a buggy with a single chaprassy to attend her; when she might have been the honoured wife of a Calcutta Judge, blazing in diamonds, and surrounded by silver sticks, moving like a sun, the centre of a system, giving law in the empire of fashion, and shedding light and brilliancy upon all within the sphere of her attraction.

There were some words in Mrs. Russell's discourse which she used in rather a different sense

to that in which Charlotte understood them. Her very favourite expression delicacy was one of this number. Mrs. Russell's delicacy of mind gave her an utter abhorrence of inconvenience in all its shapes and forms, and every thing that could promote it. Refinement, comfort, and wealth, were in her mind synonymous terms; or at least so incorporated that they could never be separated. The actual sight of suffering and faces covered with tears, was more than she could endure. The poets only can make tears an ornament of beauty, and she tastefully preferred their sweet delineations to the miserable reality. The delicate state of her nervous system, as her medical adviser Doctor Fairspeech told her, required repose; her frame needed rest, and her mind should be filled with agreeable objects to prevent the wear and suffering which delicate minds are subject to. Her sensibility was too acute to permit her taking part in the sorrows of her friends; all it would allow her to do for them was sincerely to enter into their joys and prosperity. Taking advantage of the sympathetic points which here presented themselves,

Miss Percy produced a letter in which her uncle desired that she would request the direction of Mrs. Russell's acknowledged taste, to order whatever was proper for his dear Elizabeth ; at the same time inclosing a blank draft upon his agents, to be filled up as Mrs. Russell might deem requisite. This well timed acknowledgement upon Colonel Howard's part had its effect, and disposed Mrs. Russell to show the taste he had given her credit for, in her elegant choice of Elizabeth's bridal paraphernalia.

It was settled that the marriage should take place early in the next month. The intervening time was spent by most of the parties very much to their own satisfaction. Bently's handsome exterior and gentlemanly manner gained so much upon Mrs. Russell's good opinion, that had he been a civil instead of a military servant, he would have been just the husband she could have chosen for Elizabeth. As it was, he found such favour in her eyes, that he spent his time almost exclusively at her house.

Fortescue was still at Calcutta, detained by government business. A settled melancholy

seemed to devour him. He came seldom to Mrs. Russell's, but in society like that of Calcutta, it was impossible but that they should often meet, and then he seemed rather to strive to meet Charlotte with composure than to shun her. Flora Hume had become Mrs. Melville, and embarked with her husband on his going to take possession of his command. Caroline Owen had, with much parade, bestowed her fair hand upon her obsequious attendant, and was anxiously looking towards the close of the cold weather, at which time she had resolved to wind up by a fancy ball, in return for all the attentions she had received. In the mean time she was busy in preparing the dress, and assisting at the rehearsal of parts of a band of itinerant musicians, which her sister intended to head. She herself had intended to figure as Queen Elizabeth holding the revels at Kenilworth, and the masquers were to be introduced for her royal diversion. Nothing could afford a better opportunity for the display of the magnificent contents of her jewel-box, and it would also be equally favourable for the exhibition of her sister's ac-

complishments. Richly should be Leicester, and Sir Walter Scott's masterly description should stand in place of master of the ceremonies. This was such a happy thought that as soon as it became generally known in Calcutta, Mr. Richly found votaries eager to fill every part, from the courtly throng of "gay knights and fair ladies," to the morris-dancer with his cap and bells.

Elizabeth and Bently were anxious that upon their marriage Charlotte should consent to become a member of their family; and Charlotte was equally so to be with them, and to quit Calcutta. It was not, however, an easy matter to reconcile Mrs. Russell to this arrangement. She could not be brought to relinquish the society of both sisters at the same moment, and nothing, perhaps, but the necessity of change of air for Miss Percy could have made her grant a willing assent. Charlotte had in vain endeavoured to combat the melancholy which was day by day undermining her health, and, in such a climate, languor of body increased the dejection of mind under which she laboured. Mrs. Russell, how-

ever, begged that she would stay with her while Bently and her sister remained at Barrackpore.

Lord Glencardine, as a testimony of his approbation of Captain Bently's conduct in the field, had, since his return to Calcutta, paid him the most flattering attention ; and when his consent to the marriage was asked (a ceremony which every servant of the Company is obliged to observe) kindly offered him the use of one of the beautiful bungalows in the park at Barrackpore, until his boats should be in readiness to proceed to his station. Thither accordingly Captain and Mrs. Bently had proceeded immediately on their marriage; and, in the calm which succeeded, Miss Percy felt the solitude of her situation to be insupportable. In the midst of the gaieties of Calcutta she was solitary. One after another, the friends in whom she felt an interest, or who were interested in her, had left her. She still walked the same round, but she met them no more. Had she been permitted to decline society, or to have enjoyed the society of nature in her works, her mind would not have sunk, as it now did, in dull stagnation. She no

more met with Fortescue ; since her sister's marriage week passed after week, and still he came not. One evening, when Mrs. Russell and she had returned from their ride, and walked up to the front verandah, where Mr. Russell was reposing himself in the starlight, she heard Montessor say, in answer to some question he had put regarding Fortescue, " I fear he is falling into very bad health ; he looks miserably ill, and his spirits seem entirely to have left him." Mrs. Russell was too quick sighted not to observe that he was not the only sufferer, and observed it with regret, as she had now other views for Charlotte, to whom she was as much attached as it was possible for her to be beyond her own roof ; or, more properly, if we are critical enough to inspect all the component parts of which her regard was formed, whose well being she wished to promote, as it re-acted upon her own comfort.

Charlotte Percy was beautiful in person, charming in manners, and elegant in mind, and, more than all, her conduct was founded upon principle. Though these were endowments which Mrs. Russell could not appreciate as they

ought to be appreciated, she felt them strongly as the world feels them. Miss Percy's accomplishments were acceptable to her taste; the cultivation of her mind relieved the tedium of Indian life, her manners graced it, and the loveliness of her person stamped these qualities with the seal of the world's approbation. Add to them rank and fortune, and the rectitude of her principles would enable her to carry them high, like a fair banner without spot, streaming over the heads of the multitude. This was precisely the kind of friend whom any woman of elegant taste would wish to produce.

It had not escaped Mrs. Russell's observation, that, in proportion as Fortescue's attentions had been remitted, Sir Robert Marshall's had been increased, and the very next morning fully explained the motive. Mrs. Russell and Miss Percy were in the drawing-room when he entered; the former writing notes under the punkah, the latter drawing near a window. After paying his compliments to both ladies, and inquiring when they had heard from Mrs. Bently, he remarked to Mrs. Russell, "that the concern

Miss Percy seemed to feel at being separated from her sister rendered her, if possible, still more lovely and interesting. He will be a fortunate man, Mrs. Russell, who can reconcile her to a yet greater separation." He hesitated, as if waiting for Mrs. Russell's encouragement to proceed; but she felt too sincerely what was due to the dignity of womanhood to grant it, and merely maintained the attitude of a complacent listener. "Shall I confess to you, Mrs. Russell," he proceeded, "that if that lot were mine I should think life too short to manifest my gratitude. Have I your permission, my dear friend, to address your lovely niece?"

Mrs. Russell, although she feared from late observations that Sir Robert's suit would prove unsuccessful, still felt that there was some reputation attached to having refused a title. True, she would infinitely prefer that it should be accepted, and she was very willing that the effort should be fairly made. Had it not been for Elizabeth's strange perversity, which preferred Captain Bently to the Honourable Mr. Montessor, it would never have entered Mrs. Rus-

sell's head to doubt it; as it was, she thought the chance worth trying, and, however it might terminate, felt gratified that the proposal should be made. She therefore with the best grace granted her cordial assent, and even gratified Sir Robert with wishes for his success. It was not her intention to lose his acquaintance, and attendance in public; therefore she resolved to stand his friend in the affair, terminate how it would.

Charlotte had gone on quietly drawing, without being in the least sensible that she was the subject of conversation, until Sir Robert advanced to her table with some complimentary observation upon her work, and took the opportunity which Mrs. Russell's leaving the room gave him to lay his hand and fortune at her feet. Miss Percy heard him with unfeigned surprise and distress. Her gentle nature shrunk from the pain she must inflict; but she mildly, though steadily, persisted in her denial.

Sir Robert, perhaps under the influence of a little self love, was at first willing to attribute her refusal to her dread of separation from her

sister, and in consequence proposed every alleviation. When at length he was brought to perceive that it was quite independent of the subject, he yielded the point, bowed to the ground, and made a precipitate retreat, in sorrow, not unmixed with something of the anger which all men feel at being subjected to what they conceive the humiliation of a refusal.

After he was gone, Charlotte still bent over her drawing, vexed at the distress she caused, and almost dreading what Mrs. Russell would say on the subject; and when that lady made her appearance, Miss Percy hastened to anticipate what she felt was to be got over, by candidly stating to her all that had passed. Mrs. Russell listened with less impatience and less vexation than she had done upon a former occasion, though she could not forbear pointing out to Charlotte the brilliant fate she was casting from her, and earnestly begging her to reflect that, if she ever intended to settle in life, she could certainly hardly expect a second time to meet with so many advantages concentrated in one person — “ Fortune — charming manners —

splendid prospects, and consideration in society. And in addition to all these, Miss Percy, do you think it nothing to have a permanent rank established, which is recognized the whole world over? You know his title is ancient and hereditary; and from his uncle he will inherit a princely estate. Pardon the freedom, my dear Charlotte, which is caused by my affection for you; but surely, if you were not pre-engaged, you could not be insensible to such advantages." Miss Percy, in perfect sincerity, protested that no engagement whatever existed, and begged that Mrs. Russell would not urge her farther upon a subject where her part was taken.

The occurrence of this event was yet another reason for Miss Percy's anxiety to leave Calcutta, and also a means of reconciling Mrs. Russell to her departure, as she now saw all her hopes frustrated of detaining her in the way she could wish; and when a letter arrived from Barrackpore, saying that Bently would be in Calcutta the next day but one, to attend her in her little journey, Mrs. Russell made no further objection; only Mr. Russell, with his usual kindness,

said he would himself have the pleasure of driving Miss Percy half way, and then putting her, he hoped, safely into the hands of her brother-in-law; therefore he begged she would write to her sister, and communicate his improvement upon the original arrangement; hoping, at the same time, that a staff appointment for Bently in Calcutta would soon give Mrs. Russell and him the pleasure of their society. The intervening time was spent by Miss Percy in necessary preparations, and paying farewell visits. She reserved that for Mrs. Dundas until the last, feeling it to be that in which she was most interested.

CHAPTER V.

When Hope, alas ! has quenched her light,
We wither in our bloom ;
Unheeding health, and joy, and life,
We dread, yet make, our doom. SONG.

THE evening before Miss Percy's departure for the upper provinces, she drove down to the gardens to take leave of her estimable friend Mrs. Dundas. From the servants she learned upon her arrival that their mistress had gone out to take her evening ride, but would certainly be at home at dinner. Miss Percy therefore walked up stairs with the intention of awaiting her return, and enjoying the view of the river in the back verandah. She was so occupied in the recollection of the hours she had passed there with Flora, and the pleasure she had enjoyed, that, until she was close up to the flower stage, she did not observe a gentleman who behind it leaned over the open balustrade ; and, turning at the sound of her steps, discovered Fortescue,

thin, haggard, and wretched. He started at the sight of Charlotte, and her name burst from his lips as if unable to believe his eyes, which also saw a change in her. "Miss Percy, you have been ill!" and he anxiously advanced to take her trembling hand, as she faintly articulated "I have not been well," and sunk upon the garden chair behind her.

"O, Charlotte!" he exclaimed, in a voice of heart-piercing misery, "could you but know — dare I but tell you, what is passing here!" and he pressed his hand upon his heart, which almost beat audibly under the agony of his emotions. "But, no! that can never be;" and he relinquished the hand he held. "You would despise me as I despise myself!" and suddenly drawing near to her, he said, with a look of anguish, "Do not think hardly of me, Miss Percy; when you know all, forgive me, and forget my madness."

Charlotte had listened in breathless amazement, until his last appeal smote upon her heart, and she burst into tears. Fortescue made a distracted movement, as if he would leave her, but

instantly cast himself impetuously at her feet. "You have been ill," fixing his eyes upon her pale and wasted countenance; "and, wretch that I am, my violence has terrified you." "Rise, Mr. Fortescue! rise!" said Charlotte earnestly; "be calm, and listen to me." "No!" he returned passionately: "let me grovel here for ever; until you have promised that you will not despise me."

"O, rise!" returned Charlotte, starting from her seat; "it is impossible any conduct of yours could ever merit such a thought."

"Generous and noble!" he exclaimed. "Why cannot I lay bare my heart before you? I have yet one request to make ere I remove myself for ever from your presence. But it is madness — it must not be!" and he rushed from the verandah down stairs, and threw himself into his curricule, for which he had just been waiting when Miss Percy entered.

Poor Charlotte, overcome by the scene, seemed rivetted to the spot, until the sound of his wheels rolling over the gravel assured her that he was indeed gone, and brought the relief

of tears. The dread "for ever" sounded in her ears, and the certainty that some insuperable obstacle existed, which made Fortescue as miserable as herself, oppressed her breaking heart, and almost took from her the power of respiration. She wept for some time without intermission, and when Mrs. Dundas came home it had become so dark that she did not perceive what her friend had suffered. She tried to persuade Charlotte to stay dinner with her, but her promise given to Mrs. Russell excused her. From Mrs. Dundas she had before learned that, in going down the Bay of Bengal, Major and Mrs. Melville had encountered very severe weather, and that their vessel had been forced to put into Chittagong. Now she heard with pleasure, as it gave her a prospect of meeting them, that while detained there Major Melville had received a letter requiring his immediate presence at Benares, where he had been before stationed, and that in consequence Flora and he had proceeded to that station without delay.

After taking an affectionate leave of Mrs. Dundas and her excellent husband, who warmly

expressed his wishes, as he put her into the carriage, that change of air might benefit her health, Miss Percy bade farewell to the gardens. Her ride home was cheerless and melancholy; the night was cold, and in accordance with her feelings; and a thick white fog, common in Bengal after sunset in the cold weather, obscured every object, and made her progress very slow. The density of the mist rendered it impossible for the coachman to direct his horses, and neither lamps nor musalgies were of the least service, so he was even obliged to give them the bridle, and let them find their own way back. Miss Percy, on turning out of Dr. Dundas's gate, put down one of the glasses to endeavour to ascertain the road, but it was impossible to distinguish any object in the sea of thick white vapour by which she was surrounded. The horses' heads were undiscernable; even the musalgies, who, fearing to be separated from the carriage, had one on each side seized the traces, and finding the lights of no use to the coachman, held them to the horses, were quite undistinguishable. Miss Percy, alarmed at find-

ing herself alone in such an unusual situation, demanded of the coachman, "what he meant to do."

He answered in Hindostanee, which she now began to comprehend a little, "Your slave will take care. Do not let fear eat your heart. If we do not go near the tank on the plain, and if we take the right entrance at the Kidderpore bridge, there is no danger. My horses are very wise ; they know the way to their own stable."

Composed by this assurance, doubtful as it was, Charlotte put up the glass, and sunk quietly into a corner, revolving in her own mind all that had passed, and the necessity there was of rousing herself from the languor which she felt was benumbing her faculties. Thus left to their own guidance, the horses put down their heads, and step by step picked cautiously their way, and at length arrived safely at home, notwithstanding the denseness of the fog, and without other interruption than once or twice straying a little out of the right road as they crossed the open plain.

Stiff with cold, suffering, and fatigue, Miss Percy required Mr. Russell's assistance to alight,

who had, on hearing the wheels, run out to meet her. Mrs. Russell had delayed dinner for her coming, and, as the clock struck nine a few minutes before her arrival, had become alarmed at her long delay, and had just given orders to send out a whole battalion of bearers and chappassys with lamps to look for her. Charlotte would willingly have retired to her own room; but she felt that, however much she required rest, such a step on the last evening would be unkind to those who had been so kind to her.

“ I should have been more miserable about you, Charlotte,” said Mrs. Russell, “ had I not known that you were under the care of Russell’s coachman, who has driven him for the last twenty years, and knows every step of the garden road, and is as good a whip as any Mussulman in India; and there is such a perfect understanding between the natives and their horses that you might fancy they had some means of communication together unknown to us.” “ The secret, I believe,” returned Mr. Russell, “ consists in kindness and constant association. Of good sices you may say, that they live with their

horses, sleep with them, and, not unfrequently, eat with them ; that is to say, take part with them in the contents of the grain bag."

Perceiving how much Miss Percy wanted rest, Mrs. Russell rose early from table, and accompanied her to her room, where she ordered some mulled claret to be carried, which she insisted on Miss Percy's taking, to prevent the bad effects of the cold.

" I trust, my love," she said, as she kissed her cheek, " that you will soon regain your strength and colour in the upper provinces, and return to me next cold weather."

Charlotte thanked her for the wish, and for all her kindness to her sister and herself, with affection and sincerity ; for she felt that Mrs. Russell had manifested attention and regard for her, even in things where their ideas could not coincide : she took farewell then, as she could not think of disturbing Mrs. Russell at the early hour at which she was to depart.

Before seeking the rest she so much needed, Charlotte entered fully upon the difficult and humiliating office of self-examination, and took

herself seriously to task for the feelings she was indulging. She felt the sinfulness of the thankless reception or rejection of the many blessings offered to her, and the wickedness of slighting all, because one single good had been withheld. "Shall I suffer my talents, such they are, to lie dormant? my health to fade, and my youth to consume? Shall I, thus resisting God's will, fill my friends with disappointment and sorrow? Ah no, I can never be so ungrateful. I shall exert every power with which I am endowed, to struggle against this ill-fated passion, and sincerely endeavour to seek strength where alone it can be found, to enable me cheerfully to submit to what in His wisdom He sees the best." In conformity with this wise resolution, she on her knees poured out her oppressed heart before her God. The mists which passion draws over the earth-born mind, began to disperse; and as her heart rose in fervent aspirations to do His will, her agitated feelings became more calm, and a holy confidence spread over her mind, that as He had vouchsafed to show her the way, He would assist her to walk therein.

She rose in the morning, if not happier, at least more at rest; she saw clearly the path which lay before her, and her resolution was taken. Let not those who have never experienced Divine assistance, because they have never sought it, think it unnatural that a girl of nineteen should resolutely struggle against the evils which her reason saw, and her heart felt. Sorrow and suffering are feelings so utterly repugnant to human nature, that every creature seeks to get rid of them if they can, though the means taken are often not adequate to the end. The unthinking strive to fly from them; the vicious to dissipate them; the worldly to counteract them; the virtuous alone seek to know where they have their rest, that they may be enabled to apply the remedy.

Punctual to his hour, Charlotte found Mr. Russell in waiting to conduct her, and he expressed great satisfaction at seeing her somewhat recovered from the effects of her last night's expedition. The mornings were now so cold that she was glad to accept his proposal, and have a large cloak over her pelisse and shawl.

Though the sun had begun to show himself over the horizon before they crossed the Marattah ditch, the ancient boundary of the city of Calcutta, they were able to keep the hood of the phaeton down. The whole way is well shaded by double rows of fine trees, under which it is as smooth as a howling-green — trees, which always shady and always green, afford as efficient shelter in January as in the leafy month of June. Natives on either hand were busied in gathering in the third harvest of their fertile year; yams, potatoes, and an infinite variety of Hindostanee vegetables.

At the usual places of changing horses, or “Coxe’s Bungalow,” as it is familiarly called, Captain Bently waited for Miss Percy. Charlotte thought she had never seen him look so well. Every turn of his countenance, every accent of his voice, spoke the perfect happiness that reigned within. Mr. Russell regarded him for a moment with undisguised pleasure, and shaking his hand cordially, said, “Now I forgive you, Bently, for running away with our sweet Miss Elizabeth; since I am certain that she is

better with you than with us." He then entreated that Charlotte would not omit to write from every station in their route; and parted from her and Bently with great regret, saying, "I shall miss you, Miss Percy, at my solitary breakfast. My horses are changed. Farewell!" and he retraced his steps at the moment Miss Percy and Bently in his buggy started off in the opposite direction.

Bently talked, and Charlotte listened, for "out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh;" and she resolutely tried to turn her thoughts from dwelling upon the contrast his animated appearance and conversation presented, with what she had witnessed in Mrs. Dundas's verandah. Bently told her how many times he had gone up and down the river, and how often he had rambled over its banks, in history renowned, with no companions but his rifle, his native servants, and his own thoughts; and the change he now experienced, and the delight he anticipated in showing all these spots to her and Elizabeth. Nothing earthly could give such comfort to Charlotte's suffering mind

as the certainty of her beloved sister's happiness; and yet, such is the perversity of the human heart, that when she compared it with her own prospects, it became almost oppressive, and one refractory tear fell, as she thought that the party might yet have had an addition. But she hastened to wipe it away, and turn her mind to the contemplation of blessings within her reach.

Three quarters of an hour brought them to the entrance of the Governor General's park, where they turned in and proceeded along the beautiful green sloping banks of the full-flowing Hoogly. On the left, the park opened into a variety of charming scenery: gentle eminences, tufted with wood, fell in green and grassy swells into the silver lakes which showed themselves through the dark trees. Islands covered with clumps of bamboo served as resting places for the flamingoes, who, in gay troops, waded with their long black legs, and stretched their slender necks to catch their prey in the shallows, or, when they were weary of fishing, clapped their rosy wings in the air; while the more heavy pelican stretched out his at the full length,

white as snow, like a fisherman drying his nets in the sun; and the graceful cirus, in sober suited grey, paced backwards and forwards like a sentinel upon duty. Muscovy ducks waddled along the sunny slopes, or sailed in gay parties on the still waters. Two majestic ostriches from the Cape strolled about at their own good pleasure, like giants looking down on the sports of meaner birds, or repelling with their armed heel every four-footed animal which ventured to approach them. All was life and motion. The birds sent up shrill cries of joy, or of communication, to each other, from their different fishing stations. The waters rippled under their eager chase of their finny prey; and an antelope, escaped from the confinement of the deer park, joying in his liberty, his large dark eye dilated to the full, snuffed the wind, and bounded up several feet perpendicularly, twinkling his slender legs in the air, and alighted with the ease of a French opera dancer to take a new spring; then, to vary his sport, he tried his speed, and shot along with the rapidity of light. The eye could hardly catch his glossy

bay coat glancing out of one thicket into another. Every now and then, in the midst of his race, in pure effervescence of spirits, as if he delighted to show his ability, he made half a dozen of his perpendicular bounds without stopping; dilating his nostrils and his beautiful eyes, and exulting in his capability to spring from the earth, like a creature of air.

“What a perfect picture that lovely animal is,” said Charlotte, “of youth, beauty, and health!”

“Yes,” answered Bently, “and if you are disposed to moralize, the resemblance may be still more strongly traced in the unapprehended dangers with which he is at this moment surrounded; for here come Lord Glencardine’s hunting elephants, and the chetahs * following.”

As he spoke, the whole cavalcade entered the park by the western gate, just opposite to them, returning from what Bently conjectured to be an unsuccessful morning’s search. Their keepers in long leashes led the hunting leopards, with

* Hunting leopards.

their hoods drawn down over their eyes; but as soon as his lordship, from his exalted seat in the howdah,* caught sight of the antelope at a distance, he made a signal to his attendants, who instantly unbound the eager eyes of the leopards, who already scented their prey, and slipped them on their game. Away the active and ravenous animals dashed in keen pursuit; and away bounded the fleet antelope, alive to his danger. Curling up their trunks, as if also taking part in the hunt, the elephants followed at a long swinging pace, which carried them very fast over the ground; so in a few minutes the whole of the actors brushed from the scene like a change in a dream, and the noise died in the distance. Miss Percy was glad not to witness the fate of the beautiful creature which a moment before she had seen so full of happiness. Another moment brought them up to Bently's bungalow, where they found Elizabeth on the steps of the verandah waiting to welcome them; and, for a moment, one sister forgot her happi-

* Seat on the elephant's back.

ness, and the other her sorrow, in the pleasure of being again united. The morning air, and the joy of meeting, had so raised Charlotte's colour, that her sister's satisfaction was not abated by perceiving all the change which the last five weeks had made in her. Breakfast stood ready in the hall of this sweet little retreat. Three doors on one side led into an open verandah which commanded the river, gay with passing boats; the Danish settlement of Serampore stretched along the opposite bank; and three doors upon the other side led into a verandah which opened upon the verdant lawn and beautiful park scenery. In the novelty of the scene, and in the new ideas which it created, Charlotte found some relief of mind from the monotonous weight which had pressed upon her in Calcutta. The sight of her sister's happiness, like a genial atmosphere, acted with a soothing influence; and by drawing out her feelings, strengthened and refreshed them in the exercise. Perhaps there are few efforts more difficult than to change the habitual current of our ideas, without a previous change in circum-

stance or in scene. In many cases, feelings become so incorporated with places that it is impossible to separate them. They take to themselves a "local habitation," and though on leaving the spot we may sometimes be able to leave them also, on our return again we are sure to find them as before. Elizabeth was not ignorant of her sister's sorrow, but had too much wisdom to feed it by useless remark, and too much delicacy of mind to notice it to her husband. Whatever might be his thoughts upon the subject, he appeared to think that Charlotte's depression of mind proceeded from declining health; and tried all in his power, by exercise and interesting occupation, to restore the one and relieve the other. A week passed at Barrackpore, during which time Miss Percy had walked more than she had before done since her arrival in India. She and Elizabeth usually went out in their tonjons, while Bently rode by them; and he always found something worth walking for. When that was the case, the tonjons were set down under a tree, the bearers reposed upon the grass, and Bently, giving his

horse to his side, and an arm to each of the ladies, strolled on. It seemed to him as if he had waked to a new life ; so much did society enhance all his enjoyments ! The eye of sorrow sees the world wide, empty, and silent. Happiness finds it populous, animated, and speaking, teeming with life and joy. Bently felt this as he led his companions round the deer park, and marked every variety, from the small mouse-deer, to the overgrown nyl-ghau. Without were several other animals, collected from different parts of the country. “ Observe that noble creature,” said he, “ and you will see the magnificent description of the book of Job fully realized ; that is the wild ass of the wilderness, unsubdued by servitude, unbroken by domestic drudgery ; the fire of freedom is in his eye, and the pride of independence in the arch of his neck : ‘ He scorneth the multitude of the city, neither regardeth he the crying of the driver ; whose house I have made the wilderness, and the barren land his dwellings ; the range of the mountains is his pasture, and he searcheth after every green thing.’ ”

“And let him rejoice while he may;” said Charlotte, looking upon the beautiful captive, who was not less so that he had still the show of liberty left him. “He is taken, and in his thralldom that pride must be tamed.”

“What a pity,” answered Elizabeth, “that he cannot lose his savage fierceness, without losing at the same time that fire and spirit, which make him so imposing.”

Barrackpore, though a large station, presents an air of quiet and retirement like a country village; which joined to its military neatness and propriety, make it one of the sweetest places in India. The bungalows in four lines stand each separated from the others, every one surrounded by its own corn-ground, flower-garden, and neat trimmed hedge; while the whole cantonment is at right angles intersected by well kept roads, smooth as bowling-greens, and has the river in front and the parade ground in the rear. Government-house, and its beautiful grounds, are merely separated from the cantonments by a piece of water from the river, over which there is a bridge; and the park, as

a drive, is at all times open to the European inhabitants.

At the end of a week, Bently found that his boats were almost ready. He was anxious to get under weigh, as the cold weather was now almost over; and he wished that the ladies should be habituated to the river before the hot winds came on. They went on board with him to inspect their accommodations: and though Charlotte's budgerow was considerably less than Captain and Mrs. Bently's pinnace, she was surprised to find how much it exceeded the space she could have had in a very large ship. Pinnaces and budgerows, though varying in size according to the number of oars they row, generally consist of a hall or dining-room, a bedchamber, dressing-room, and bath, in the stern; the whole with Venetian blinds round, with a verandah in front of the dining-room, for the convenience of servants waiting at table. The cooking is always carried on in another boat fitted up for the purpose. The little fleet, now a scene of anxious bustle, consisted of the

two large boats already mentioned, a cook-boat, upon which the hen-coops were made fast; horse-boat for the horses and buggy; and a large baggage-boat for the Hindoo servants and stores. The servants and dandies chaced each other up and down the bank, each making as much noise, and doing as little work as possible; while the ayahs screamed in a shrill key, "Where have you put my trunk?" "Where have you put my hookah?" and, "Where am I to cook?" "Where am I to smoke?"

"It is your business," said the sirdar bearer, "to look to that," as he brushed past with great consequence, rattling his huge bunch of polished keys; "but where is my petarra, * and my mat?"

"Hear him," said Mrs. Bently's ayah, in great indignation; "as if my mistress did not care more for me, than for a hundred Hindoo fools like him!"

"And who are you," said the enraged bearer, strutting up to her, and fiercely shaking his

* Covered basket.

hand in her face, "that dare to stand upright in my presence?"

"A follower of the true prophet," answered his opponent, trembling with rage; while she spun round, under the effervescence of her own passions, like a tee-to-tum, and clapped her hands in the air; "a follower of the true prophet, who will strike your unbelieving lips with her shoe;" and she stooped to take off the intended implement of correction, but, losing her balance in the action, fell on the ground, when the bearer marched off, master of the field, insulting his fallen foe with most triumphant shouts of laughter.

"What are you making such an uproar about there?" said Charlotte's ayah, willing to take part in the confusion. "Have not I more cause to be angry? but I do not say a word to anybody. I don't make a noise; though the dobee * has lost my last new chudder; † but he is a thief, and of the caste of thieves; and I will make his face black in the presence of his mas-

* Washerman.

† Drapery for the head.

ter. What is he, the dog of a slave, that he should do such a thing? If it was in the house of a black gentleman, he would cut off his ears and nose for him, as he deserves."

"Yes," said the matrâmy, * willing to support her patroness; "and the sirdar-bearer, what a rogue he is! though he has eaten his master's salt for the last ten years."

"Those that take the bread out of others' mouths, will want it themselves," said the cook. "I never see or hear, but what belongs to me. Abdar, call my mate, I want him to carry this basket for me."

"It is no work of mine," answered the man of saltpetre, coolly, "to call your mate, or your servants, so you may call them for yourself."

"And it will be no work of mine to remember your curry, when the next sheep is killed," retorted the cook.

"Hot curry needs cold water," said the abdar, "so why separate friends? There's a dandy, make him do your work; he is paid for

* A woman who sweeps the rooms.

it, and his back is made for the burden. Your mate, like his master, is too wise to work, when there are others to do it for him."

"And this ass of a mistree," * said one sice, "has laid the planks so far apart, that Dragoon will put his foot through and lame himself."

"And he has not left room," echoed the other, "for Sir Peter to move; and since my master is married, he will go mad if any thing happens to his buggy horse."

"The mistree has got his payment and gone off without doing his work," joined a grass-cutter. "Better get a sepoy to go to the bazaar and catch him, and bring him, and keep him under a sentry, until his business is done; and get a dandy to bring in the grain." The poor dandies were made to work for all who, dressed in a little brief authority, took the opportunity of their master's absence to lord it with a high hand.

At length it was announced that the horses were on board, and all things ready to weigh

* Carpenter.

with the morning's tide. Captain, Mrs. Bently, and Miss Percy, dined at Government-house in the park, and slept on board their boats, that they might be ready to start in the morning. On her dressing-table, Miss Percy found letters from Mrs. Melville and Mrs. Russell. The former wrote from Benares, where her husband expected to be detained for a few months, and where she was very happy to find that she had every chance of seeing friends so dear to her. She had received letters from Mrs. Marriot, who appeared to be going on in her new sphere of life quite to her own satisfaction; and Flora expressed her hope, that under Mr. Marriot's guidance, she would gain more solidity and consistency of character. Mrs. Russell expressed her regret at Charlotte's absence; and told her how lonely were her evening rides, as business for the last week had prevented Mr. Russell from going out with her. The cold weather campaign was now almost over, and nothing stood between them and the apathy of the hot winds, but Mrs. Richly's masquerade. Montessor spent his mornings with the hunt,

and his evenings with the jockey-club. Fortescue she believed was still in Calcutta, but she had not seen him; and Sir Robert Marshall she had only met once at the bachelor's ball, when he told her that he was preparing for a voyage to Madras, where he should at least spend three months. Colonel Courtney, whom she had asked to dinner that evening, had died the night before after a few hours illness, even before his servants had time to call medical assistance, and the first intimation she had of it was the undertaker's card brought in, requiring the attendance of his friends at the funeral in the evening; so that all at once, one of the changes so common in India, had occurred in her society.

The contents of this letter greatly shocked Miss Percy; and she knew it would distress both Bently and her sister; but she resolved not to damp the very moment of their outset by the first ill news which had come since their marriage.

Those who have passed years in India know how quickly the scene changes, and that it is not

a thing of very unfrequent occurrence, to receive an invitation to the funeral of some one with whom they may have dined in the pride of health and enjoyment the night before. Charlotte recollected Bently's arrival at Colonel Courtney's house upon the day of Mrs. Marriot's marriage, and felt how this circumstance would stand connected in Elizabeth's mind; she therefore resolved for the present to take no notice of the letters she had received.

CHAPTER VI.

Son of the winged days, why dost thou build the hall? Thou lookest from thy towers to day; yet a few years and the blast of the desert comes. It howls through thy empty courts, and round thy half worn shield. The rank grass waves on the wall, and the fox looks out of the windows.

OSSIAN.

BEFORE getting under sail, Captain Bently found that it would be prudent to wait until the *bore* had passed with the first influx of the tide. In spring-tides in the Hoogly the water comes roaring up with great force and velocity, sometimes raised five or six feet above the level of the river, which, owing to the curvatures of the banks, it crosses in an oblique direction, breaking alternately on opposite points. Its rushing approach might be heard at a distance as it rolled on with great violence; and our little fleet had pulled out into the middle of the stream before it broke again on the Serampore

side, from which it crossed with the rapidity of lightning to the point on which stands the Barrackpore flag-staff, throwing some of the boats high and dry out of the water, and swamping others, that had not taken the necessary precaution of getting out of the way of its most powerful action. Bently's boats danced in the swell, and though there was a clamour among the baggage boats, like the clanging of sea-fowl, no accident happened. Thus a hundred miles from the mouth of the river, with the tide in their favour, they commenced on the first of February their voyage to the upper provinces.

The flood tide carried them forward in spite of the north-west monsoon, which had not yet changed. To Mrs. Bently and her sister, the scene was new and interesting; every reach of the river presented subjects for the pencil; and when the tide failed them, and they were obliged to track in shore, the very trees and plants which sometimes overhung the boats, were objects of study and delight.

As they passed near Hindoo villages, they saw

multitudes of women at their devotions in the river, or, like Rebecca of old, coming forth with their pitchers to draw water; the gay colour of their garments, and their gold and silver ornaments, (for every native above abject poverty wears ornaments of some kind,) formed a striking contrast with the simplicity and gravity of their manners.

The great acts in which native benevolence or munificence usually exhibits itself, is in digging large tanks for the supply of water, or in furnishing places of shelter to the sun-burnt traveller. To this end, ghauts are usually found in the native villages on the banks of the river, accommodated by a flight of steps down to the water, from a square chabutter, or platform of mason-work, covered with a roof resting on pillars, where travellers may repose on their route, with every convenience for performing their ablutions, or where the women of the village may rest when they draw water, and refresh themselves with the news of the day. In villages where there is no intermixture of Mussulmen, the Hindoo females of the lower classes are not condemned to such strict confinement. In addi-

tion to any little building charitable people may have bestowed upon these ghauts, they are always shaded by magnificent trees, under which, if the people are Mussulmen, a fakir has established himself to guard the tomb of some celebrated saint, and to get alms from those who frequent the ghaut; and if they are Hindoo, the sages of the village there usually hold their courts.

Miss Percy was little with her sister without the company of Bently, and in all their conversations together Fortescue's name was never mentioned; it seemed by tacit consent to be passed over, even when they spoke of Calcutta and absent friends. They all rejoiced in the prospect of meeting Colonel Howard at Benares, where he commanded, or more properly the military cantonment of Secroule, as well as Major and Mrs. Melville, who were there also. Elizabeth, in her husband's society, had all the happiness earth is capable of bestowing; every day developed some new conformity in taste and feeling, something that marked an identity of mind rarely found in two individuals, or, if

found, still more rarely joined. A thousand times her heart rose in gratitude to the Giver of every good and of every perfect gift, and she trembled to think that her present state of happiness was too bright for mortality. The love that ardently craves the happiness and perfection of its object, though gratified with all that earth can give, still lacks certainty; and the soul, in conscious impotence, lifts itself to Him who is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" with whom is no variableness, or "shadow of turning."

The banks of the river on either hand presented a rich and highly cultivated country, which they drew near. Moorshedabad (the most famous place in India for silk) was covered with young mulberry-trees for the silkworms; cotton and tobacco employing, in a country where machinery is unknown, thousands of hands. Flights of ortolans showed the approach of hot weather. It was curious to remark the regularity of their movements; with one accord, all turned their backs from the observer, when they seemed like a shower of little black spots

in the air, and when, with the same precision of movement, they all turned up their breasts, they looked like a white cloud in rapid motion.

The boats were usually brought to before sunset, for the purpose of letting the people go on shore to cook. The different castes separated into their own little groups, all busily employed in the necessary preparations. They dug holes in the ground in which they kindled their fires, and set up their mats behind them, to keep off the wind. Some brought little chimnies formed of baked clay from the boats, on which they set their cooking-vessels. One collected wood from the jungle, another ground the curry-powder, some prepared the food to be dressed, and others drew water; in short, the whole party was in cheerful motion, all equally intent upon expediting their evening meal; and when it was ready, each caste ate in their own circle, taking care that no unclean thing should come near them, their white garments fluttering in the wind, and their numerous fires illumining the dark jungle, which echoed to the sound of their voices and of their songs.

Bringing to the boats, if possible, near a bazaar, was always their object, where wood and cooking-vessels could be purchased; and, if that was not the case, the natives, wherever they could do it with hope of escaping with impunity, never hesitated to help themselves to whatever they wanted, notwithstanding their master's positive orders that a sepoy should accompany the servants, to see that they paid for what they took.

One evening, when Bently and the ladies returned from their walk, they were met by the Hindoo servants in a body, with the sirdar bearer at their head, his eyes almost starting from their sockets, who, as spokesman for the rest, exclaimed, "Hear, Sahib! the grass-cutter with his own hands has committed such a crime! O, Sahib! my heart fears to think of it."

"What has he done?" said Bentley; "speak!" — looking from one to another, as he saw all open-mouthed, though no sound escaped their lips — "Not murder, I trust?"

"Worse, Sahib, worse than any murder but that of a Brahmin."

“What has he done?” demanded Bently, losing all patience. “Speak, I command you.”

“The dog! the slave! the child of a hog! he has killed the young of a cow!”

The announcement seemed to break the spell of silence which such an unheard-of crime had thrown on every tongue, and all were at the same moment loosed to demand justice, in the form of punishment upon the offender.

“If a Hindoo had committed such a crime, even without intending it,” said the sirdar, “his whole life would have been too little to spend in penance for his fault. He would have kept shut that hand until the nails grew through the back of it; or he would have had that arm tied up until it had lost the motion, and become like a withered branch; but him, the pariah dog, he has eaten what he had killed.”

“*Sub admi chub currow* — Every one be silent!” said Captain Bently; “Hear my orders!”

“*Sahib ki nukkam soon no* — Hear my master’s orders,” echoed the sirdar.

All waited in respectful silence.

“The grass-cutter has been guilty of a great

fault," continued Bently; "he has insulted your customs"—

"Our master is just," said the bearers.

"And disturbed the peace of my house. He therefore can no longer remain in it. But we are here at a distance from any town, and I cannot discharge him to fall a prey to wild animals in the jungle; therefore he shall remain with the boats until we reach Rajamahal, when he shall receive his wages, be sent on shore, and a new man taken in his place; and until that time he is to cook and eat separate from the rest of his servants."

"*Atcha, sahib, bah atcha*—Good, sir, very good," said the body of petitioners together, as they salaamed to the ground before him. "May your head touch the heavens!—may your name fill the earth!—may you live for ever!"

This commotion on the cooking-ground had been caused by the sices and grass-cutters having seized upon a stray calf; and without hesitation they killed it and dressed it for their curry, having first given part to some of the other Mussulman servants; and the Hindoos,

perfectly exasperated at such a sacrilegious act, and afraid of defiling themselves by tasting the food which was tainted by the polluted wind which breathed around it, had taken their dinner from the fire and thrown it to the jackalls, and rushed forward in a body to demand satisfaction for such an atrocious outrage.

When Bently had reached his boats, he found three or four well-dressed chaprassys, followed by as many coolies* with bangies, that is to say two baskets, one before and the other behind, depending by long cords from a bamboo, which they carried over their shoulders. On seeing Captain Bently and the ladies, the foremost chaprassy, with his spear in his hand, and profound salaams, presented a note written in Persian, from his master, Rajah Rage Chunder Behadur, at the same time ordering the coolies to advance with the presents, which they laid at Captain Bently's feet. The Rajah, according to native custom, hearing that an officer of some name was passing up the river — (nothing can

* Porters.

be more surprising than the speed and accuracy of native intelligence) — had sent a present of such things as are always acceptable to travellers, young kids, milk, butter, fresh fruit, vegetables, and flowers, with rose-water and sugar, an almost unfailing accompaniment of native civility; to all which Bently returned a suitable answer, and dismissed the train with buxies,* in token of respect for their master.

When they were gone, Captain Bently ordered the sirdar bearer to take one of the kids which he had just received, for himself and his fasting brethren, well knowing that hunger keeps up dissention; at the same time giving them permission to remove to a proper distance from the spot which had been polluted by the blood of a calf.

A few days after they had entered the "Great River," the lordly Ganges, the boats were brought to, for the purpose of visiting the extensive and intricate ruins of the ancient Hindoo city of Gowr, now a mass of ruins, almost buried

* Literally gifts, but usually money.

in the jungle, with which it is overgrown. As rambling through desolate places is always attended with some risk, Captain Bently deemed it expedient to arm several of the servants with hog-spears and musquets, making them take with them at the same time his double barrelled rifle and pistols. Their tonjons were landed for Elizabeth and Charlotte, in which they proceeded at ease over the broken ground, and had a full view of every thing around them. Captain Bently walked between them, where the road would permit, and pointed out objects with which he was familiar, keeping an attentive eye upon the jungle through which they passed, and encouraging his people to make as much noise as they chose.

Gour was for two thousand seven hundred years before the Christian æra, the capital of Bengal; and the ruins which still remain after the lapse of so many ages show what it must have been in the days of its splendour. They found the palace in extent a city of itself, inclosing within the walls several great tanks, on the banks of which the sacred alligators were

basking at their ease and extending their unwieldy bulk under the shade of enormous trees, which from their size must have seen generations flourish and decay ; their leaves were still green and the branch budded, but where were the thousands who had reposed under their shade ? In the Mussulman palace, which had been erected by the royal house of Timour in 1500, and beautified and ornamented by successive Mogul Emperors, the only human inhabitant was a solitary fakir, who, regardless of the perishing memorials of human grandeur, proudly pointed out an impression of Mahomed's foot, which had survived decay : " Kings disappear, and palaces moulder in the dust, but the mark of the prophet is always the same."

The Hindoo palace, built time out of memory, they found utterly uninhabitable ; the halls were open to the winds of Heaven, like those of ancient Babylon, they had been swept by the besom of destruction, and were now the retreat of venomous reptiles and all unclean birds. It was impossible for the bearers to carry the tonjons over the disjointed stones, and here the ladies

got out, and with Bently strolled under a stupendous gateway, which must have contained apartments for the royal guard, and opened into a large square, strewn over with fallen columns, Hindoo sculpture, and half effaced inscriptions, in the ancient and sacred Sanscrit language. They found themselves in the midst of ruin, extending on every side as far as the eye could carry them. The crumbling remains of a mighty city lay around them, fast returning into the earth from which it sprung. Only here and there, a tall minaret rearing its airy head, caught in full splendour the sunbeams, which could hardly make their way in straggling lines through the masses below, and the jungle with which they were entwined. The pekul, like a court parasite, clings to high places, and undermines and disjoins the firmest set structure; while, with a show of beauty, its glittering leaves cover the long rents its insidious roots have made, forcing themselves through all obstacles, and appearing to bind and hold together what they in fact destroy. The chokeydars thought it prudent to fire their pieces in order to give

warning of their approach to those whom they might not wish to meet; and the often repeated echoes this produced, answering each other from side to side, seemed like voices from the ground, warning those who still trod its surface, that they must soon join those who for thousands of years had slept below. Mrs. Bently became alarmed at the fearful chattering, which the report of the guns occasioned amongst the sacred monkeys, who, still protected by the same superstition which influenced the old inhabitants, dwelt in groves which seemed to bid defiance to time, and who, roused by this unwonted invasion of their quiet, danced, screamed aloud, and played their antics, in wild mockery of the desolate scene. Man had disappeared, and his works had almost gone, but still they survived, race after race, and nature renewed her self-sown trees for their habitation. One of the chokeydars had omitted to draw the shot with which the musquet was loaded before he fired it off, and in its discharge unfortunately killed a young monkey in the arms of its mother, which produced a scene of sorrow and confusion difficult

to describe, and the more painful as it was almost human. The mother crying piteously, fondly snatched up her little one, examined it round and round, and vainly tried to stop the blood which flowed from its wound. When she found it made no movement in return to all her caresses, and that it was actually dead, she dipped her finger in the blood and held it up to the man who had fired, as if to show him what he had done ; and then, as if suddenly actuated by a desire of revenge, turned round and showed the bleeding young one to the multitude of others, who with faces of eager curiosity began to assemble in hundreds. The appeal was not without effect ; rage in a moment seemed to take possession of the whole fraternity, and with grins and yells they commenced to pull down whatever came to hand, and would certainly have engaged our party in a formidable contest, furnished as they were with abundance of missiles, had they staid to wait the attack. But Bently, foreseeing the event the instant the accident happened, ordered a speedy retreat, and they found shelter among some of the standing

ruins before their light foes recovered from their consternation, or observed the way by which they made their escape. There they were obliged to remain until quiet was restored and they had reason to think themselves forgotten. Charlotte, seeing her sister more composed, ventured to leave her for a moment to look through a long arcade of broken arches, when her attention was arrested by something moving about amongst the fallen pillars: what it was the obscurity of the place prevented her from ascertaining, and ascending a flight of roofless steps, which commanded a view of the spot, she saw an European figure disappear behind a distant colonnade, she fancied, with the quick intention of shunning the party to which she belonged. Though wrapped in a long cloak this figure excited so much interest in Miss Percy's mind, that she mused upon the circumstance during her return to the boat, but forbore to mention it either to her sister or to Bently.

The light was now leaving them, and they were anxious to gain their fleet before its total disappearance. Night so soon follows sunset,

that the interval between them is very short; but the want of the beautiful twilight hour is more than compensated by the purity and clearness of night. The stars in the frostiest night in a Northern climate do not equal in brightness the cloudless splendour of a night in the hot winds, when every branch and waving twig round the horizon is clearly defined, and brightly relieved off the deep blue heaven, paved with stars sparkling in their own lustre, and naturally disposing the thinking mind to look back on times that are gone. The glories of the firmament are for ever the same. The stars now came forth in their beauty one after another, as when Gour sat a queen in the midst of the nations, as when in her they looked down upon a multitude of all kindreds and tongues and people, whom no man could number, big with enterprise, flushed with conquest, and overflowing with wealth; who had delighted in the voice of singing men and singing women; but war, and fire, and pestilence had been upon them, and they had gone to their places, and the place that once knew them shall know them no more for ever.

When they drew near the shore, and the tonjons had got on a little in advance, Bently observed an old native woman laid down close to the water's edge, and, well knowing what it meant, went forward to ascertain if she was still in life, and would receive any assistance. He found her to appearance more worn out by years than illness, and, though extremely feeble, perfectly collected in mind. To his inquiries she answered, "that she had not many hours to live; that she hoped the coldness of the night would finish all; and that her sons had brought her to die in the holy Ganges."

Bently, though he was perfectly aware of the strength of native religious prejudice, still tried to convince her that her illness did not seem to be mortal, and that it would be much better that she should permit him to have her moved into one of his boats, where by proper attention she would recover.

"Nay, sahib, nay," said the old creature steadily, "it cannot be; for if God should again give me health, all my house must do the same as if I was dead, and never more speak to

me, or take me amongst them; the children I have nursed could not eat pawn with me, or give me water to drink."

"But," said Bently, still anxious to save her, "I shall give you a house to live in, and provide you with everything you want as long as you live;" a proposal which was objected to by all the Hindoo servants present. Julall, the sirdar bearer, declared, "that every person who came to the Ganges to die ought to die, and go to heaven directly, and that it was a good fate to be able to do so;" and the poor creature, mildly holding up her emaciated hand, begged "the gentleman to listen to their words, for they were the words of truth; that it would be shameful to go back from the sacred river, and displease her God, and lose her caste. Though the God of white gentlemen allowed them to mix with all castes, Hindoos must die and be burnt by their own. She was old — she had lived long enough — she was ready to die. She had been brought at her own request by her dear children to the holy Ganges; they were waiting at a little distance, and would not

let the jackalls come." And pointing to a pile of dry wood, "Everything is ready, and to-morrow I shall not be here."

Bently, habituated as he was to scenes of the kind, left the spot with a heavy heart, oppressed by pity for the sufferer, and admiration of her self-possession; with deep disgust of the principles which sanction practices enough to curdle the blood to witness, and of power to extinguish humanity and wash out natural affection.

On reaching the budgerow the manjee told them that another English gentleman's boat was anchored about a mile down the river. Miss Percy heard the circumstance without comment, but in her own mind connected it with the figure which she had seen in the ruins. Her sister and Bently attributed her silence and abstraction to fatigue from over exertion; and she retired early to her own boat, more miserable than she could even bear to acknowledge to herself. The greatest part of the night she passed in endeavouring to obtain a mastery over her own feelings, and deep was her humiliation to find how difficult the task would be. She had given her

happiness to the keeping of another, and her peace of mind depended upon circumstances over which she had no controul. Before God she opened her heart, and in fervent prayer sought relief, which the world or its reasonings can never bestow. Feeling that she sincerely desired to submit her heart to His disposal, and strengthened by the assurance that "those who come to Him, He will in no wise cast out," she retired to rest, after a conflict, the severity of which can only be known to those who have sought to bring their own treacherous hearts under the dominion of Christ. Since she had been in India no night had appeared so gloomy : there was no moon, and the stars which had shone forth with such beauty before they had left the ruins, were now completely hid by clouds, which sometimes collect at this season of the year, foretelling a north-wester. The jackall and pariah dogs, in search of their foul banquet, mixed their incessant howlings with the sullen roar of the river as it rushed by. The darkness kept the chokeydars, the guardians of the night, upon the alert; their loud watchwords were

passed from one boat to another, at their different places of anchorage, with occasional discharges of matchlocks to warn duois * that they were not unprepared.

* Robbers.

CHAPTER VII.

Fare thee weel, thou first and fairest,
Fare thee weel, thou best and dearest ;
Had we never loved so kindly,
Had we never loved so blindly,
Never met—or never parted,
We had ne'er been broken-hearted. BURNS.

NOTHING material occurred, as for several days the boats tracked up slowly with a strong contrary wind, sometimes losing in one day the distance it had cost them two to make, and occasionally, at bringing to in the evening, catching glimpses of a large pinnace, which commonly anchored upon the same side of the river with them, but always at a distance sufficient to prevent communication. Miss Percy had for some days felt unwell, and for two or three mornings had not left her own boat until mid-day, so that her absence when they were passing the reef of rocks called Pier Point did not occasion much uneasiness to her sister, though she

often expressed to Bently anxiety at the illness which caused it. The stream ran round this point with such fury that it was impossible to make way against it, without sending all the dandies on shore to pull the goon * fastened to the mast-head. The pinnace took the lead, and having a larger compliment of hands, with great difficulty succeeded in rounding the point, and was soon out of sight. Miss Percy's boat followed, and her manjee, † though he had fewer hands upon the goon, thought that with a lighter boat he should be able to make head against the stream.

Charlotte, who watched the progress of the other boat, felt considerable alarm when she observed the difficulty with which her own dandies proceeded. The stream ran so furiously, that two or three times they were pulled off the shore into the water by the resistance of the boat; and the ayah, in much greater fear than her mistress, began to scream, "Ullah ! ullah ! O, my mother ! my mother ! The boat will be drown-

* Tracking rope.

† Chief of the boat's crew.

ed! the boat will be drowned! O, ullah! ullah!" Captain Bently's sirdar bearer, an enterprising and robust man, always remained in Miss Percy's boat while it was separated from his master's. In addition to many good qualities, he possessed activity equalling that of any European, and, contrary to the custom of natives in general, loved exertion for its own sake. At this critical moment he presented himself at the door of Miss Percy's cabin, stripped to the waist, and told her "not to be afraid; that he would stay by her whatever happened," and took upon himself to reprehend the ayah for frightening her mistress, with the acrimony which Hindoo servants in the confidence of their master's favour usually feel for these Mussulmanee attendants of their mistress, who come before them, and take the *destoor* over their heads, and ended by threatening to throw her into the water if she did not make less noise. At the moment Miss Percy hardly comprehended the value of the bearer's promises; but a few minutes convinced her it was her only earthly hope. With a sudden jerk the tracking rope broke

short, and without hands to direct her, away the boat whirled round and round, down the boiling eddy of the stream, threatening every instant to strike upon the rocks. In vain the bearer entreated Miss Percy "not to fear;" the boat continued to spin round, now head, now stern foremost. Charlotte, notwithstanding the assurances of her faithful bearer, now looked on her fate as certain, and sank on her knees to implore strength from God to meet it. In that fearful instant a ray of comfort gleamed through her mind at the recollection that she was the only sufferer, and that her dear Elizabeth and Bently were in safety, and she ejaculated aloud, "O, God! thy will be done!" With a prodigious shock the boat struck upon a sand-bank in the middle of the river; Miss Percy was thrown down by the violence of the shock, and so much stunned by her fall that she became perfectly insensible to the horrors of her fate.

Julall, who had from former experience foreseen what would happen, had laid himself flat down on the floor; and now, with the speed of lightning starting on his feet, snatched up his

insensible mistress, and precipitated himself with her from the window into the river, as the bank on which they struck was under water, and every stroke of the boat seemed as if it would be her last. Grasping Miss Percy firmly with his left arm, he swam stoutly with his right to a part of the bank which was out of water, and, though a considerable surf broke upon it from the violence of the stream, he succeeded in dragging Miss Percy upon it, and laid her, to all appearance dead, above the water mark.

The poor creature was himself so much exhausted, that further exertion was on his part quite impossible, even had he deemed it of any use ; but when, after watching his mistress for some minutes, he found she did not move, he removed to a little distance, and wrung his hands, while tears streamed from his eyes, lamenting that "one so young and so good should be so soon taken away. Wah ! wah !" He reiterated, "wah ! wah !" in sorrow and in wonder. "O, that you had been half an hour sooner !" he cried, as he observed a little boat which rowed quickly towards him from the pin-

nace, which they had so often noticed, and before it could touch the bank Fortescue sprung to the shore, and threw himself on his knees by the inanimate body. "Charlotte! my beloved Charlotte!" he frantically exclaimed, seizing her cold hand; "look upon me! Speak to me—speak only one word to sooth my misery!" but the pale hue of death seemed to have spread over her beautiful features; her eyes were closed, and no sound escaped from her lips. He bent over her in unutterable agony, to ascertain whether she breathed, and frantically calling to the boatman to make haste, snatched up her breathless body, and carried her into the boat. The dingy* had steered for the sand bank, and taken off the ayah from the wreck to which she clung. On beholding the state in which her mistress was, she rent the air with her shrieks, and, like the rest, believing that she was dead, kept aloof from the pollution of contact. Fortescue still clung to what seemed a desperate hope, and seating himself in the bottom of the boat, raised

* Very small boat.

her head on his bosom, and continued to chafe her hands and her temples, sometimes deceiving himself with the hope that she moved, or that he felt her breath; and again, yielding to the agonizing conviction that she continued still and insensible as at first. A stifled groan passed his lips as he felt the inefficacy of the means he was using, and he offered the boatmen any bribe they could ask to exert all their strength and gain his pinnacle. When they did run alongside, he experienced the most distressing dilemma to which a human creature can be subjected, —relief at hand, without the power to avail himself of it. It seemed almost impracticable, without assistance, to get into the pinnacle, which was high out of the water, with Miss Percy in his arms, and no earthly power could prevail with either servants or crew to render themselves unclean by coming near the dead: all drew back, even to the bearer who had risked his own life to save hers. Fortescue, almost in despair, raised her in his arms, her long wet hair hanging over his bosom, and seizing a rope on the vessel's side with one hand, and holding Miss

Percy by the other, by a desperate effort gained the deck. The shock seemed to produce an effect nothing else had done, and Miss Percy sighed faintly. Faint as it was, it did not escape the ear of Fortescue; he felt it strike on his heart, and wake every hope anew. "Charlotte," he cried, "my own Charlotte, look upon me; once only look upon me, that I may be certain that I am not deceived." Again she sighed softly, and, opening her eyes slowly, looked around with bewildered gaze, as if to comprehend the nature of her situation. "She lives!" he exclaimed. "It is enough! O, merciful God, I thank thee!" and with the delicacy of true affection, ever mindful of its object, he carried her into the cabin, and committed her to the care of her ayah, now as anxious to render assistance to her living mistress as she had been to shun her dead. Fortescue charged her not to disturb her mistress with questions, nor address one word to her which she could possibly avoid; and Miss Percy remained for some hours in a quiescent state, occasionally opening her eyes, and looking about, without speaking,

as if endeavouring in her own mind to recollect where she was. At length, as she became more collected, the circumstances of the case presented themselves indistinctly to her memory; and she even had some idea that she had been in the water, but how she got there she could not call to mind. A confused notion of having seen Fortescue too passed across her mind; but until her ayah, contrary to his express orders, mentioned his name, and fully detailed all that had passed from the striking of the budgerow until the present moment, she thought the idea could be but a mere imagination of her own brain. During this recital, agitated by a variety of emotions, she wept without speaking. That she was beloved, even as she did love, no longer admitted of a doubt; and, since it was so, how could she reconcile it with Fortescue's preceding conduct? Some fearful mystery was there; and she dreaded its disclosure. Selfishness, however, was no part of her character, and should the accident which happened to her boat be communicated to her sister, she knew the dreadful alarm it must cause, and therefore felt anxious

to join her, before the servants had spread the report. "And I go own self, when Missis lie quiet, and dry clothes bring Mem put on." From her communicative ayah, Miss Percy heard that her own dandies, as soon as the tracking rope broke, jumped into the water, and carried down by the violence of the stream, soon reached the budgerow; where, with the assistance of men from some of the other boats, they succeeded in righting her, and again got her in tow.

As soon as Charlotte had finished dressing, she requested to see Mr. Fortescue in the dining-room, that she might be enabled to carry her wishes into effect. He came instantly, but after the first gleam of joy at seeing her recovered had passed from his eye, it was easy to perceive that his noble brow was shaded by settled sorrow. However, he seemed to have nerved his mind for the effort he was to make; as he felt how indispensable it was to Miss Percy and himself. He advanced anxiously to meet her, and to hope that she was in some degree recovered from the distress of the morning.

She rose from her seat, and extending her hand, stammered some almost inarticulate words of thanks for the life he had preserved, and her wish, by her presence, to prevent the misery which the knowledge of the accident would occasion to her sister, and, overcome by her agitation, she burst into tears.

“Miss Percy,” said Fortescue, still holding the hand she had given him, “I had come steeled to bear my own sorrow, but the sight of yours unmans me. Only say that you are not offended with me; that my distracted exhibition of my feelings has not displeased you, and I shall take myself from your sight for ever. O Charlotte!” he added, in a voice of heart-rending misery, “you would forgive me, if you could but know what I suffer!”

“Do not think so meanly of me, Mr. Fortescue,” said Miss Percy; “do not think that I can ever forget the gratitude I this day owe you; and if my tears have distressed you, think that they proceed from the suffering I witness.”

“And is it indeed so?” he frantically exclaimed. “Dare I look for happiness, and must I

resign it. To have suffered alone—Oh, Miss Percy! beloved Charlotte! to what am I betraying you? But it is time that I should lay my heart bare before you, though it should break in the effort:” and, traversing the apartment hastily; “Fool!” he exclaimed, “worse than madman, to imagine that I could know you, without loving you; that I could day by day contemplate your perfections without yielding up heart and soul to your sway; and at a time too, when I knew myself bound by my promise, solemnly given to my dying uncle, to make his only child my—wife.” The word almost choked him, he gasped, and with a strong effort, uttered it through his shut teeth.

Miss Percy, as if with an intuitive feeling of what was coming, sat opposite to him, listening with fearful expectation; her lovely countenance fixed and pale as marble, until roused by the dreadful blow: “Say no more, dear Fortescue, fulfil your promise, and be happy; for know, that dear as you may be, your honour is still dearer. Give me at least the consolation to think,” and she stood erect as she spoke, “that

if I have loved unadvisedly, I have not loved unworthily."

"Yes Charlotte, spirit of a heavenly mould ! I will be what you wish ; but to lose you ; to resign you ; to be cut off from your presence ; to bind myself by every tie, human and divine—human nature is too weak for such a sacrifice !"

"Human nature is," said Miss Percy ; "but Divine grace will perfect it. Let this subject rest for ever : " and, as if anxious to get through all she had to do, before her courage failed her ; "Will you have the goodness to find means of my rejoining my sister ? " and courtseying, without trusting herself to add another word, she retreated to her cabin. When the door was shut, which she believed separated them for ever, the spirit, which had hitherto sustained her, sunk, and her full heart found relief in tears ; nor did she try to check them ; nature asserted her right ; she wept without control, until her ayah came to announce that they had rounded the dreaded point, and could plainly distinguish Captain Bently's pinnace anchored a-head. In a few minutes they were joined by

Captain Bently himself, who more alarmed at the delay of Miss Percy's boat than he chose to confess to his wife, had in his own dingy * returned to look for her. He met the budgerow in tow, and soon found she was not there; the servants hastened to give him a detail of their disasters, and ended by telling him where their mistress had found refuge. He thanked Fortescue with heartfelt gratitude for the signal service he had rendered them, and affectionately congratulated Charlotte, whom he loved as a sister, upon her escape, and sympathised with her on the sufferings she had gone through.

Every one has experienced how much the presence of a third person, enables us to suppress even our most powerful feelings; and in the present case, it assisted Fortescue to give his friend a detail of all the circumstances of the morning, without betraying more than to an ordinary observer might pass for active humanity. He dwelt most on his anxiety to come up with the wreck when he saw her beating

* Small boat.

herself to pieces upon the sand bank ; and entirely passed over his feelings and miseries, when the servants, thinking Miss Percy already dead, had refused to assist him. He accounted for his timely appearance, by saying that Government had sent him to Patna upon an investigation which would probably detain him some months. Bently observed with regret the ravages which illness had made upon the fine countenance of his friend, and clearly discerned the truth, or at least something approaching to it, from the appearance of both parties. Charlotte's wan countenance and weeping eyes might indeed have passed for the natural effects of terror and suffering, had not previous observation set him right, and he hastened to put an end to a situation sufficiently distressing to himself as well as to them, by telling Miss Percy, that as soon as he had ascertained what had happened, he had written a note to her sister, to inform her that Charlotte and he would be with her in a very little while, as an accident had happened to the boat, which detained her ; and he feared the alarm their delay might occasion. " And now,"

said he, making an effort to dispel the restraint which hung upon them, " I must carry off Miss Percy, like a recreant knight, who puts in his claims when the field has been fought. Mrs. Bently and I, my dear Fortescue, shall be for ever grateful for this day's service, and you will, I trust, give my Elizabeth an opportunity this day at dinner, to tell you how much she is your debtor."

Fortescue was in his own mind seeking for an excuse to answer this very natural request, when a Government chaprassy, with more haste than is usual amongst natives, entered, and with a profound salaam, presented a huge letter, which he said he had travelled almost night and day to deliver; and he said, he was charged not to rest, until he had put it into the hands of Mr. Fortescue. In such circumstances Fortescue was obliged to give it immediate attention, apologising to Miss Percy for the necessity. On running over the letter, he found that it contained an order for his instantly proceeding to Cawnpore by dawkh, to take charge of Mr. Marriott's situation under peculiar circumstances, with which he should be made acquainted on

his arrival. Orders had been transmitted to Patna, to lay bearers upon his road, where, if he had not arrived before the messenger overtook him upon the river, he was to repair without a moment's delay. Conjecture was useless as to the cause of such a sudden order; and in his present circumstances, Fortescue felt relief in the necessity of action thus imposed upon him. Charlotte, in the midst of her own troubles, could not help feeling some anxiety on Mrs. Marriott's account; she had a vague surmise, that all was not as it ought to be; and though both the gentlemen were of the same opinion, they forebore expressing what would further harass her over-wrought spirits.

The moment of parting was now come, and Bently feeling for his friends, walked on deck to look after his boat. Fortescue offered his arm to support Miss Percy, though he trembled almost as much as his mute companion. "Farewell, Charlotte! I dare not say, think of your miserable friend; and I cannot say, forget him. O that we might yet meet on earth," and he grasped her hand with convulsive earnestness,

“without its being a crime to say how much I have loved you.”

“Impossible,” said Charlotte; “but we shall meet there;” meekly raising her eyes to heaven. “God bless you!” She uttered the words with the holy simplicity of prayer, and, in an instant, Bently lifted her into his bolean.

Fortescue stopped one instant to take leave of his friend. “You are going to a distant station, Bently, and we have little prospect of soon again seeing each other.” He stopped for an instant, as if collecting force to proceed.

“A fine healthy station, Fortescue, where I would rejoice to see you.”

“That can never be, my friend,” said Fortescue, quickly. “I must return to the Presidency, as soon as this business is finished; I ought to be there in two months at furthest, to receive my affianced wife from England, by the first ships.”

Bently looked aghast.

“Yes,” he continued, “her to whom I have been betrothed, since my early youth, by my uncle on his death-bed.”

Bently now comprehended all the inexplicable circumstances which had from time to time fallen under his observation. There were many particulars with which he wished to be made acquainted, but he forbore aggravating the distress of his friend by questions, or ill-timed congratulations, or any observation which could induce a comparison with his own circumstances, and warmly returned, "Wherever you are, or wherever you go, my dear Fortescue, our best wishes shall ever be yours;" and cordially shaking hands, they parted, and in their small boats passed off from the pinnacle in different directions. Fortescue, obliged to proceed with all possible dispatch, was forced to leave his heavy boats to follow at their leisure.

CHAPTER VIII.

There is a kind of character in this life
That, to the observer, doth their history
Fully unfold.——

SHAKSPEARE.

FREDERIC Fortescue was the second son of an ancient family of good landed estate in the county of Devon. He had lost both his parents in early youth, and with his brother had been entrusted to the guardianship of his uncle who loved both, but particularly Frederic, with the affection of a father. This worthy relative had made his fortune abroad, and returned late in life to purchase a fine estate, and settle near the paternal domain. His wife died a few years after their marriage, leaving him one lovely little girl, the delight of his old age; and as years passed on and his affection for his nephew increased, he set his heart upon the union of Frederic

and his Sophia, as the most certain means of securing the happiness of both.

When Frederic, at the age of eighteen, returned home to his uncle's house, in one of his college vacations, he found the old gentleman in a very declining state of health, but, as usual, delighted with his presence, and hardly willing to have him for a moment out of his sight. The little Sophia, a beautiful child of ten years old, waited upon her father with the most watchful attention; intuitive affection supplied the place of experience in ministering to his wants. She set his footstool, turned his pillow, or would read to him, sing to him, or arrange her flowers on the little table before him, as she felt he was able to bear it. Day by day he declined, and seemed to gaze more earnestly upon Frederic, as if wishful though unable to communicate the subject which oppressed him. At length he was constantly confined to his bed, and became so ill that his end was approaching. Raising himself faintly from his pillow, he beckoned his nephew towards him, took his hand, and begun in an anxious voice: "My dear Frederic, I

feel that I am upon the verge of eternity, and must seize this moment to tell you the last earthly wish of my heart. Promise that you will comply with it, and set my mind at rest."

"My dearest uncle," returned Frederic, tenderly, "you know you have only to name your wishes to me."

"But promise, Frederic," said the dying man with increasing earnestness, "promise, Frederic, that you will comply with my last wish."

"My dear kind father, why should you doubt it?"

"It is that I would be," returned the old man tenderly. "Frederic, you promise on your sacred word of honor, to grant my last request, and release my mind from earthly care."

"I promise," said Fortescue, solemnly; overcome by his uncle's entreaties.

"May the blessing of heaven be upon you, my son," said the old man fervently, placing his trembling hand upon the head of Fortescue, who kneeled by his bed-side. "My desire is that you become the husband of my Sophia, as

soon as she attains her eighteenth year;" and worn out with the exertion he had made, the invalid sunk back upon his pillow, and remained for some time in a state of torpor.

After his death it was found that he had executed a deed whereby he devised the estate of Hurt-hall to his daughter Sophia Fortescue, and to his nephew Frederic Fortescue, upon their marriage; but if either of the parties refused to fulfil the said marriage, the estate was to go solely and exclusively to the individual who had not refused obedience to his wishes.

A will so singular was not concealed from the parties most interested; and though Frederic looked forward to the fulfilment of his promise to his uncle with pleasure, he resisted every wish of mutual friends, to remain unemployed at home, and accepted with great alacrity a Bengal writership, which was offered to him by an old friend of his father. He sailed for India in a few months after his uncle's decease, and by his own abilities and his family interest, which brought them into notice, he had, before the term fixed for the fulfilment of the will ar-

rived, attained a high situation; where his presence was so indispensable, that he found it impossible to obtain leave of absence.

He had been accustomed to consider his cousin as his future wife, and to correspond with her as such; at his request, she had sent him her miniature picture, and from the artless sweetness of the countenance he felt certain that his uncle had provided for his happiness. At the appointed time he had written in conformity with his promise, claiming her hand, stating the reasons which made it impossible for him to leave India, and begging that she would come to Calcutta to fulfil their engagement. All this had passed before Miss Percy's arrival, and at the time Fortescue first met her, he almost considered himself a married man. But it was impossible to see her without admiration, and he studied her character with delight, fancying that his cousin might in many respects resemble her: but the attentive observation of a character like Miss Percy's, was to a man of Fortescue's turn of mind, a dangerous study; he observed every trait so minutely, and trea-

sured them so faithfully, that he could no longer disguise from himself the alarming truth, that Charlotte Percy realized every idea he had formed of excellence in woman. It was in vain he endeavoured to persuade himself that his feelings were mere approbation, or even joyful anticipation of the amiable dispositions he had been accustomed to hear praised, and expected to find, in his affianced wife. The evening of the ball at Government-house let him into the true state of his heart, and on his return he paced his room in agony, bitterly repenting the engagement he had formed, and the certainty there was of his adding to his own misery, that of the amiable creature he was soon to call his wife.

A thousand and a thousand times he resolved in his mind the possibility of extricating himself from the misery into which he was plunged; and as often he gave it up in despair. To break his word solemnly given to his departed benefactor; to subject his daughter to the needless risk of a long voyage, and the disgrace of rejection, was not to be thought of; he would en-

dure all things first. But then to marry her in return in the bloom of youth and beauty ; to receive from her hands a princely fortune, and in exchange to bring her a heart devoted to another, and by every tie which is binding upon man to separate himself from that other, was unmingled wretchedness.

Then he turned to the hope, that as it was impossible for him to go home, Sophia would never consent to undertake such a long voyage alone ; or that she might have formed another attachment, and he recollected with joy, that a longer time than usual had elapsed since the date of her last letter. Young, beautiful, and rich, he knew she must be surrounded by suitors ; and he hoped that her childish recollection of him might be effaced by the attentions of some more fortunate rival. But these hopes, eager as they were, did not long mislead him. The morning of Miss Panton's marriage brought letters from Europe, which informed him that his cousin, in conformity with her father's will, accepted his offer ; and not deterred by the dread of a long voyage, had permitted her guardian

to secure a passage for her in the Lord Huntly, and was to sail in the first fleet. Here was a death blow to hopes he had perhaps unconsciously cherished against his reason, or at least not unremittingly repressed, for who is there who has not sometimes mistaken hopes for realities?

When the bitter certainty of his situation burst upon him, he firmly resolved to decline, against all entreaty, every opportunity of meeting with Miss Percy, and at least, as he believed, spare her any participation in what he suffered. To leave Calcutta was not in his power, as government business required his presence until the very day after Bently had sailed from Barrackpore, and he did not come up with them, as had been already seen until the afternoon of their visit to Gour. Being perfectly aware of the dangers of the river between that place and Patna, he could not resolve to pass on before he saw his friends out of danger, though in pursuance of his determination he avoided every chance of intercourse with them. "Why," thought he to himself, as he revolved his plans in his mind, "why did I suffer a promise to be extorted from me?

Why did I bind my honour when my heart was free? and why, when I knew I was bound past the power of extrication, was I so mad as to seek Charlotte Percy's society, instead of shunning it? Why did I not fly from her while the power was mine? But what avails these considerations now? Would she not despise me if she knew how I have acted? And must not Sophia do so, if she should ever perceive that she is the innocent victim of my folly? Could the sacrifice of my heart's dearest affection insure the performance of my duty, I should at least have the satisfaction, which duty performed always bring with it, to support me; but at least I shall make the effort."

The very nature of Fortescue's difficulties, prevented the possibility of communicating them even to his dearest friend. Advice could not avail, therefore he sought it not. Before leaving the Presidency, he received a letter from his cousin upon the eve of her embarkation; written in the gay confidence of youthful anticipation, which ill accorded with his feelings; but his part was taken, and he wrote to his

friend Mrs. Dundas, as he was unable to make the communication in person, stating his engagement, his present circumstances relative to his marriage, and his near prospect of seeing his bride, by the Lord Huntly, which vessel was expected in a month, or six weeks at furthest. Mrs. Dundas replied by an assurance of her friendly interest in every thing which concerned him, and the pleasure she would find in receiving Miss Fortescue as her inmate in his absence, and doing all in her power to give her a favourable impression of the country. The investigation upon which he was ordered to Patna, would probably be finished, soon after the arrival of the Huntly, when he expected to return to Calcutta. After what had taken place at Pier-Pointee the government order which compelled him to proceed to Cawnpore, where he would probably be detained a much longer period, came to him like a reprieve. At least he should have time to reason with his own rebellious heart, and to bring his feelings more under command, so as to meet his unsuspecting cousin with some composure, and prevent mak-

ing shipwreck of the happiness entrusted to him. The task was a hard one, but the certainty that it was without alternative, steadied his mind, by precluding the vacillations caused by hope, and fixing it upon what it was his duty to do. He recollected Miss Percy's assurance, that divine grace could enable him to keep in the straight path; and trusted in his might who makes his strength perfect in our weakness, and who has never permitted his servants to hope in vain.

At Patna, he found his dawk laid; and from a friend, with whom he passed a quarter of an hour before starting, heard a detail of part of the miserable circumstances which made his presence necessary. He travelled night and day without interruption until he reached Cawnpore, and upon his arrival learned with regret that Colonel Howard had only quitted it a few days before to return to Benares. The second morning after his arrival, a letter of Mrs. Dundas was forwarded to him from Patna, informing him that the Lord Huntly was safely arrived at Madras, all well, and that she had

seen Miss Fortescue's name amongst the passengers, that as soon as the vessel arrived at Sangor, which would certainly be in the course of the present month, Dr. Dundas intended to go down to meet Miss Fortescue, and conduct her up the river; and again repeated her assurances that every thing for her comfort and convenience should be attended to in his absence.

Twelve months ago, Fortescue would certainly have received this letter with pleasure, but now he could not bear to think of the feelings which it excited; and dissatisfied with his own thoughts, and dissatisfied with himself for entertaining them, he passed a very miserable interval, from the receipt of this letter until his return to Calcutta.

CHAPTER IX.

The autumn leaf is seared and dead,
It floats upon the water's bed ;
I would not be a leaf to die,
Without recording sorrow's sigh.

HENRY KIRKE WHITE.

BENTLY was persuaded, from the sudden summons which had called Fortescue to Cawnpore, that something very serious must have happened to Mr. Marriott; nothing short of his dangerous illness, or inability of some kind or other to discharge his duties, could have laid Government under the necessity of sending another to the station. Charlotte and Elizabeth were too little acquainted with the customs of the country to form even a probable conjecture upon the subject; but they were all equally anxious to hear the truth, and as soon as their boats anchored off Bankipore, the place of European residence near the great Hindoo city of Patna, Captain Bently went on shore to visit

their old shipmate Mr. Somerville of the civil service, who was one of the judges at the station. From him he heard what we shall relate more particularly hereafter—a tale of misconduct and suffering which grieved his very soul, and at once explained the cause of Fortescue's summons. Happy as he was in his own family, the wretched history he had just heard impressed his mind with more forcible contrast. Mr. Somerville, though then a bachelor (for his wife was in England) hoped that the ladies would do him the honour to make his house their home for a few days. "I need not tell you, my dear Bently, what satisfaction it will give me to do all in my power to render your stay agreeable to you; and by way of inducement, I can assure you, that we have a most agreeable society at the station, several charming families, whom you will meet here at dinner to night, if I can prevail with you."

Bently finding that it was impossible to resist his friend's entreaties without doing an unkind thing, promised that they should at least spend one day at Patna, though they had been so very

much delayed on the river, and paid so many visits in coming up, that the hot winds were now set in with great force; at the same time telling him, "that the unfortunate tidings he had just heard, would grieve Mrs. Bently and her sister so much, that they would much prefer taking a quiet dinner with him, to meeting strangers."

"All that shall be just as you please. A few days ago Fortescue passed here on this unfortunate business; but I suppose he will soon be relieved of it, as he is not permanently appointed to the station."

When Captain Bently returned to his boat, and recounted to the ladies the unhappy history he had just learnt, it overwhelmed them with natural sorrow; and nothing but the desire to oblige him, could have induced either to go on shore after such tidings. But Bently urged his promise given to Mr. Somerville, and he had, as a motive for so doing, the wish to direct their thoughts from unavailing regret, and to procure for them necessary refreshment for proceeding on their voyage.

Charlotte felt very reluctant to accept this in-

vation, though she really esteemed Mr. Somerville, and would have pleasure in seeing him, yet she dreaded to hear the Calcutta news talked of, and her heart sickened at the idea of perhaps hearing that Miss Fortescue was arrived, though she strove to think of it as a thing that must be. At all events she would hear Fortescue spoken of in connexion with his present duty, and she would willingly have avoided it by remaining on board, but her last separation had been productive of such concern to all parties, that she resolved to sacrifice her own feelings and spare her sister.

Mr. Somerville's carriage waited at the Ghaut to conduct them to his house, and having given orders to the servants, whose attendance would be required on shore, and to the consumah to purchase stores for the pursuance of their voyage, they got into a small boat, which easily made its way through the multitude of native craft of every description with which the river was crowded.

The fertile province of Bahar, of which Patna is the capital, has always, from its extreme luxu-

riance, been reckoned the "garden of India," and, in the pompous style of Oriental speech, "the granary of the world." Its well-watered fields are usually the seat of plenty, even when drought and famine prevail over the rest of Asia. Nothing can be more beautiful than the extensive tracts of land cultivated with the greatest care, like the best kept garden, for the growth of the white poppies which produce the opium of which Patna is the grand depôt. The immense boats used for the transport of cotton, with their light load piled upon them like haystacks, crowded the ghauts, which were thronged with grain dealers, cloth merchants, and toy manufacturers, bargaining and chaffering in loud and long disputes, which, though accompanied by the most violent gesticulations and even abuse, never come to blows. Natives know well that making a bargain is a work of time, and therefore deliberately squat down opposite to each other, the merchandize in question between them, and mutually exert all their ingenuity, the one to outwit the other. The seller commences by the most exaggerated praises of his

ware, which the buyer answers by equally preposterous depreciation, the one demands thrice as much as he means to take, the other offers half as much as he means to give, and for some time an alternate see-saw is kept up between the parties, the one raising and the other abating, until an adjustment takes place, or perhaps an explosion, when both make a determined onset, to give *galee* abuse, and spare neither name nor kindred, ancestors nor descendants, though they are utter strangers to each other, and perhaps never set eyes on one another before. In walking a few paces from the ghaut, where the carriage was brought up under a great tree, Mrs. Bently observed something to move in the grass, and pointing it out to her husband drew back in affright.

“It is only a snake,” said a sepoy who followed them, at the same time striking his stick and making a noise on the ground to frighten it away. “A snake!” said Elizabeth, following with her eye the quick winding motion of the animal as it hasted to hide itself in its hole at the root of the tree, “and why did he not kill it?”

“O !” said Bently, laughing, “a Hindoo of his caste, would not be guilty of such an act for the world ; he would be afraid he was killing his grandfather, who, in some of his transmigrations, may have taken that amiable form.” “And if I was his grandfather, in such circumstances,” said Elizabeth, “I would make him my best salaam for dislodging me from such an engaging shape.”

“But,” returned her husband, “Hindoo philosophy teaches, that enjoyment exists under every form of life ; therefore none have a right to take it away.” “Amiable, and perhaps just reasoning,” said Elizabeth, “if it was founded upon other principles.”

This incident, trifling as it was, served to turn Miss Percy’s thoughts from her own feelings to those of the Hindoos ; and on this subject they conversed until they reached Mr. Somerville’s house. “How inconsistent,” she said, “does this Hindoo tenderness about the life of venomous reptiles seem with its utter disregard of human life and suffering.”

“True. Charlotte,” said her brother, “but

both spring from the same source." "And how irreconcilable," joined Elizabeth, "with their treatment of noble animals, which are sacrificed in hecatombs."

"We can only look for consistency where there is truth, my dear Elizabeth," answered her husband, "though perhaps in the one case, the Brahmins would seek to justify their bloody rites by saying, that life is offered as an expiation of sin, while in the other it is needlessly taken. Nothing can be more disgusting than passing, as I once happened to do, through the streets of native Calcutta, at a very early hour in the time of the Durgah Pugah, when hundreds of headless buffaloes, which had been sacrificed to Durgah, were thrown out to be cut up, and carried off by outcasts of every description. But I may with justice say, that in love of sacrifice, the Mahomedans of Bengal, particularly of the lower orders, are little behind the Hindoos."

In the portico they found Mr. Somerville waiting to welcome their arrival. He had not seen the ladies since their arrival in Calcutta, and again renewed his entreaties, that

they would rest and spend a few days with him." "I expect my poor sister," he said, "either this evening or to-morrow morning, from Bettjah, where she has unfortunately lost her husband by a jungle fever, and I should be happy to introduce her to Mrs. Bently's and Miss Percy's acquaintance."

Mrs. Bently regretted that her husband's nearly expired leave of absence would not permit them to delay longer, but promised to remain on shore until late in the evening, in hopes that as Mr. Somerville said his sister travelled dawk, she might arrive before their departure.

"From the appearance of the weather," observed Bently, "we shall have a north-wester immediately, to cool the thirsty earth and make travelling more tolerable." In accordance with his prophecy, at mid-day it came on with great violence, accompanied with rain in water-spouts. Every one repaired to the verandah to enjoy the cheerful sound of the falling rain on the multitude of leaves. All nature seemed revived, and the thirsty earth took in the refreshing draught through her thousand pores. The first rain

after continued drought is a time of jubilee, and the rushing sound of its approach, as it draws near, borne on the wings of the wind, is heard with delight, and when it actually bursts down, carrying before it the dust and sand which the wind has raised in clouds, all nature laughs and seems to rejoice aloud.

After tiffin, before any of the party had left table, a letter was presented to Captain Bently, which by its address, folding, and seal, at once betrayed its native origin, and on opening it he read aloud :

“ To the worshipful Captain Bently, Esq. the humble petition of your mate bearer Dukie.

“ My Lord,

“ May it please your highness, being now near the shelter of his own roof, your inferior workman in duty prays, that your honour would permit me to turn from the straight way, and refresh his thirsty soul with his large of families. I have two great enemy, over which your honour got large power, their names Distress and Poverty, and not long acquaintance with the

universe, and no any protector but your honour in the below.

“ And Cosinanth sircar* begs to inform your honour’s feet, that your Patna fine rice, wax candle, and table cloths, are all ready to sent to boat this present time, but cannot, because prevent him, the violent rain and blow. Acquaint my best compliments to honoured Mem, and pray her resentment to be obtained ; the taylor is not satisfied to go to boat to-night, for the hard rainy and cloudy.

Most honoured Sir,

with doubtful gratitude

your poor petitioner will ever pray.”

“ And what,” inquired Mrs. Bently with a smile, “ can be the purpose of this clearly expressed petition ? ”

“ Simply this. We pass near the Chupprah, but, as our boats are heavy, he could get there before us, visit his family, and rejoin us when we come up, and probably in addition to his

* Writer.

savings, he wished to have an advance of wages to leave in his house."

"But he knows nothing of English. Where could he have got any person to write an epistle for him?"

"Oh," said Mr. Somerville, "I am certain it is the performance of my sircar, the therein named Cosinanth Bose. I recognise his style, and his 'doubtful gratitude,' though he has occasionally varied it, when in seeking in the dictionary for a proper word to express very great, he hit upon 'furious;' and once, as the fruit of his studies, I had a letter beginning, 'Most spanking Sir, may it please your enormity!'" I can assure you, Mrs. Bently, he is not a little vain of his acquaintance with the *graces* of composition; and offended a friend of mine exceedingly by his wish to show them off. This gentleman who, like Bently, had employed him to execute some little commission, was by no means famous for the beauty of his limbs, and Cosinanth unfortunately, instead of begging 'to inform his honour's feet,' begged 'to look at his

honour's legs,' which misplaced civility was almost taken as a premeditated insult."

Taking advantage of the cool evening which followed the north-wester, Mr. Somerville showed his friends as much of Patna as was possible in so short a time. The generality of travellers find so great a resemblance in all native cities, that having seen one, they have little interest in seeing more; however, our friends were not of the number of those who can look, without curiosity and without interest, on cities which have been for centuries the seats of wealth and magnificence, which have given the law to nations, and been inhabited by a people who were as far advanced in art and refinement of life as they are at this day, while the inhabitants of northern Europe were painted savages, running in their woods.

It was late before they returned to dinner, and finding his sister Mrs. Mortimer had not arrived as he expected, Mr. Somerville became very anxious about her non-appearance, and fearful that she had also caught the fever prevalent at the station. In watching and waiting, the night

run on, and it became so late, that the carriage was ordered to re-conduct Mrs. Bently and Miss Percy on board, when the noise of the dawk bearers was heard on the public road, and the flashing of flambeaux seen as they turned into the compound. Bently and Mr. Somerville both hurried down stairs, to hand Mrs. Mortimer from her palanquin. The bearers set it down, and the two gentlemen at the same moment drew back the doors on each side, and while the bearers held up the light, stooped with the intention of offering their assistance to the inmate, but what was their horror to observe a lifeless corpse extended before them ! Mr. Somerville gazed for a moment, in stupified silence, on the pale countenance of a sister he had tenderly loved. Bently, when he had recovered from the first shock of a surprise so awful, tried to persuade his friend that it was possible his sister might only have fainted from fatigue, and ordered the servants to call a doctor without a moment's delay.

“It is useless, my dear friend,” said Somerville, with heartfelt conviction of his loss, “she

is gone for ever ; but still though he can do no good, let him come. Oh my poor sister !” he continued, taking the cold hand ; “ is it thus we meet ? and are you gone without one creature to soothe your last moments, or receive your last sigh ?” Overcome by the reflection, he bent his head on the hand he held and wept bitterly. Bently made every inquiry among the bearers, but as they were of course of the public dawk, and none of Mrs. Mortimer’s servants had yet come in, all they could tell was that they had taken up the palanquin at the last change of bearers, that the lady had not spoken to them, and that the doors had remained shut : now finding that they had carried a corpse, and defiled themselves by so doing, they retired in great disgust ; and her brother and Captain Bently carried the body of the unfortunate lady into the rooms which had been prepared for her reception, to wait until the morning should consign it to another lodging. Here Mr. Somerville determined to pass the night, and Bently resolved to stay by his friend, well knowing that whatever assistance might

be required, superstition as well as religion would prevent any of the servants from coming near the room. Bently gave every requisite order for the funeral, and heard from Mrs. Mortimer's servants, when they came in a few hours afterwards, that she had been as her brother feared, seized by the jungle fever; and that morning had been extremely anxious to push on to her brother's house, finding that her illness increased every hour. The violence of the north-wester had incapacitated her own servants from keeping up with the dawk bearers, and, as she had not then quite two stages to make, she told her own kitmagar, an old and confidential servant, to order her dawk bearers to go on as fast as possible, and to promise them a reward for their diligence; at the same time ordering him to bring up her own servants as soon as he could after her. "And these, Sahib," he said, "were, I think, the last orders my mistress ever gave. I shut the palanquin doors myself for she was very very ill, and felt it cold after the rain."

Mrs. Bently and Charlotte were greatly

shocked by this unexpected, and to them new event. Elizabeth wept in anguish, as if for the first time, the uncertainty of life in India had presented itself to her mind. The carriage was countermanded, and, would her husband have permitted it, Elizabeth would have passed the night with him, by the body of Mrs. Mortimer; but he tenderly represented to her what her sister had already suffered, and her inability to sustain such a continued state of high excitement; well knowing that affection for Charlotte would overcome every selfish feeling.

Miss Percy, though she had left her sister with the intention of lying down, and trying to procure that rest she so much needed, found it quite impossible to quiet the thoughts within; and instead of undressing mounted to the top of the house by the private stair, and leaned over the balustrade, looking at the reflected image of the hushed city, sleeping on the gliding waters of the Ganges; and she thought of the flow of time and the events it had borne in its bosom. How much had the last day dis-

closed! The morning had brought a tale of sin and misery, and the evening, death. She shuddered at the awful spectacle which had been so lately before her eyes; and felt in its full force the vanity of indulging sorrow, which might be brought to as sudden and as tranquil a termination. Then her mind went back to trace, step by step, every portion of time since she had left England, until the present hour; and oppressed beyond endurance by the retrospect, she walked to another part of the roof which commanded a projecting wing of the house; the windows of the rooms there were all open, and by the light of the numerous wax candles which burned within, she saw a couch, upon which, under a white covering, lay the body of Mrs. Mortimer. Opposite to it on each side of a small table sat Mr. Somerville and Captain Bently, who was reading to him out of a large Bible; and though the words did not reach her ear, she saw that they went to the heart of his auditor. Miss Percy felt ashamed of thus breaking in, though unintentionally, upon their privacy; and returned to her former

place, where, stretching herself upon the terrace, and laying her forehead in the dust, she poured out her stricken and humbled soul before him who is become "the first fruits of them that sleep."

It was not until the melancholy ceremony of Mrs. Mortimer's funeral was over, that after taking an affectionate leave of poor Mr. Somerville, (whose sufferings had produced a greater degree of intimacy between him and his guests in a few short hours, than months of ordinary intercourse could have done, because there the heart spoke to the heart,) they repaired on board; and again weighed anchor, with a sky as clear as if no clouds had obscured it yesterday.

CHAPTER X.

On either hand,
Like a long wintry forest, groves of masts
Shot up their spires ; the bellying sheet between
Possessed the breezy void ; the sooty hulk
Steered sluggish on ; the splendid barge along
Rowed regular, to harmony ; around
The boat, light skimming stretched its oary wings ;
While deep, the various voice of fervent toil
From bank to bank increased.

THOMSON.

THE monsoon had now changed, and they proceeded before it with much greater celerity than they had done in the beginning of their voyage. Constant caution was requisite to prevent their coming suddenly upon large trees swept in by the water at its height, or the numerous shelves and sand banks thrown up by the fury of the stream. One night, a great alarm was spread by the falling in of a large mass of the precipitous bank near their mooring, which had been undermined by the action of the rapid

stream, and washed from its foundation. Fortunately it fell at some distance from the boats, which must otherwise have been swamped by its weight. It came crashing down with the noise of a cataract, shaking the bed of the river, like an earthquake, and throwing up the water in the air; while the boats rocked about, and were in danger of getting foul of each other in the commotion.

They were now near Chupprah, the paternal home of half the bearers in India, and his Rhyebunds (literally, tied brothers), were looking out for the tall tree upon a little point, projecting into the river, well known to them all, upon which their friend Dukee had promised to wait their approach, but they had hardly caught sight of the appointed rendezvous, when they perceived that it was in motion actually coming towards them; and Julall at the pitch of his voice, shouted to the dandies of Captain Bently's boat, to inform their master of what had happened, while the rest of his brethren, screamed in concert, "O Sahib! Dukee bearer! Dukee bearer!"

The floating island still approached, borne along by the fury of the stream. The pressure of the water upon this side the river, a thing not uncommon, had separated the little promontory from the main land, and carried it away in the manner already described. Two or three native huts stood under the shelter of a clump of trees, whose long roots entwined together held the island afloat. A man of the gualier* caste, who had been on the bank when it became an island, no sooner perceived his danger, than, with the usual indifference of natives to the fate of the rest, he snatched up two of his empty earthen pots, one under each arm, and jumped into the river with them, taking care to keep the mouths above water, by which means he sailed away very much at his ease without the fatigue of swimming, until he made a convenient landing place; a mode of travelling gualiers are often in the habit of adopting when following their cows. To save the labour of walking they drive them into the river, and throwing them-

* Cow-keepers.

selves in also in the manner above-mentioned, float down the stream, enjoying the pleasure without the trouble of motion, or, if the current should happen to be against them, they seize the tail of one of the cows, who is the best swimmer, and are thus towed along in her wake.

Captain Bently came upon deck as soon as the uproar amongst his people warned him that something was wrong; and he saw with great anxiety, that several natives and children were on the severed island, amongst whom the "poor petitioner" was seen in the attitude of supplication, extending his hands to the boats for assistance, which it was not easy to give. No one dared to venture coming in contact with the island in its rapid motion, and to fasten a rope to any part of it, would be to run the risk of dismembering it from the rest. Every wave washed away some part of the earth, and the frail support threatened dissolution. Captain Bently saw that there was not a moment to lose; and gave his directions to the mangy, who sent out half a dozen of his most active hands in the dingy, and throwing one end of a rope towards

the island as it passed, which was instantly caught by the islanders, he flung the other to the men in the dingy, who pulled with it as fast as ever they could, yielding however a little to the stream, and going before it in a slanting direction towards the bank so as gradually to clear the floating dwellings from the violence of the current, when they easily turned it towards the shore: here the terrified voyagers sought firmer footing, and the dandies, taking Dukee into their little boat, returned to the pinnacle without asking a question, or bestowing a thought upon the others whom they had rescued from instant destruction, leaving them to land their goods and chattels, and after pulling their houses to pieces, carry them away, and erect them as near their former situation as possible.

Poor Dukee, though he was very well pleased to find himself in a place of security, did not testify any of the lively emotions an European would have done; and though the rest of the servants had expressed anxiety about him while he was in danger, now that it was all over, they

asked no more questions than if he had come to them in an ordinary way.

The hot winds now raged with such fury, that it was impossible for the ladies to come upon deck until a late hour in the evening ; and notwithstanding the care taken to keep the lattices wet through the day, it was sometimes intolerably hot. When they were tracking up under steep banks, showers of heated sand almost blinded them, sifting through every crevice in the boats, and rendering it impossible to touch an article of food while the sand shower lasted.

At Allahabad Captain Bently received letters, which increased his anxiety to be at Benares, but here they were again detained for two days by an accident which happened to the pinnace, and the impossibility of having it repaired upon the day of their arrival, as it was a great Hindoo holiday, and every creature was alike intent upon witnessing the sacrifices to take place at the meeting of the Ganges and Goompty. The sirdar bearer begged his master's permission to make one of the number, as Dukee, who had

been last absent, remained at home. His master knew that to reason with him on such a subject would be perfectly vain, and therefore his request was granted ; and he set off with great pleasure to witness the drowning of eight or ten self-devoted victims.

Miss Percy could not imagine that the man who had strove so resolutely to save her life, and who had even shown more anxiety than any of the other servants about the fate of the people on the floating island (who were of a different caste), should find pleasure in such atrocious acts, and she shuddered at the noise of tom-toms, which rent the air during the whole of that horrid morning.

Next day the repairs were completed, and they reached the long wished for city of Benares without further accident. At the first view of it Mrs. Bently and Charlotte thought themselves fully repaid for all the dangers and fatigues of their long river voyage. Benares, the proud sanctuary of Brahminical learning, is built into the very waters of the Holy Ganges, whose waves wash the walls of its palaces. Its numerous and

spacious ghauts of substantial masonry lead up in broad flights under wide spreading trees, whose extended branches shelter the thousands and tens of thousands who crowd them, glittering in the gold and silver tissue for which the place is renowned. Simply considered as a spectacle, it is impossible to conceive any thing more splendid than an Asiatic ghaut, crowded with multitudes arrayed in all the colours of the rainbow, mixed with draperies white as snow. Their dignified gait in walking, elegant vessels, and graceful action, correspond with the richness of the scene, which is farther heightened by a back ground of fine buildings and magnificent trees, but above all, as at Benares, by the minarets which have been recovered among the world's wonders, rearing their heads high above other earthly things, while the thin clouds float round them like a misty veil. The whole is clearly reflected in the river, with the busy throng of variously formed boats, which, from the painted and gilded floating palaces of princes, to the fisherman's dingy, crowd the ghauts and render it a scene which it is impossible to surpass.

As soon as Colonel Howard heard that Bently's boats had arrived (for he had people stationed to give him the earliest intelligence) he repaired to the ghaut to meet them, and conduct them on shore. Charlotte was at the window, keeping an attentive eye upon the steps, and watching an old Brahmin, who with reverend white beard stood in the water, teaching his little grandson of four years old, to perform his ablutions, and go through his ceremonies. And the child, though at so tender an age, seemed as grave and as immoveable as his old grandfather, and as little attracted by the bustle about him. In the midst of the crowd on the top of the ghaut before her, Miss Percy observed a little commotion, and an elephant advanced clearing a way for himself. In the howdah she saw the scarlet uniform of an European officer, who, as soon as the boats were pointed out to him, alighted, and she recognised her uncle. In a moment he was on board, and folded her and her sister in his arms with the affection of a father. They had not met since the cruel separation on board the Cumberland;

and very little observation was necessary to convince him that he had acted as wisely for the happiness of his dear Elizabeth, as for his friend Bently.

Colonel Howard, however, saw with considerable anxiety that Charlotte's health had sustained a severe shock since they last met; but ignorant of the cause, he tried to persuade himself that the dry air of the upper provinces would agree better with her than the humidity of Bengal, and the meeting was productive of heartfelt pleasure to all. He told them he had been at Cawnpore at a time when his presence was very much required. "But I shall not speak a word upon the subject now," he added; "nor indeed, Charlotte, until you have been refreshed by some rest. The heat of the boat is too much for you. The height of the ghaut and the crowd which surrounds it keep every breath of air from you; so, my dear girl, I shall take you in the howdah with me, if you are not afraid; and I have ordered my buggy, Bently, in which you can drive your wife." Charlotte, though she had never been upon an elephant,

accepted her uncle's offer with pleasure, and when they had landed, ascended the ladder to the howdah without hesitation, though she felt a little alarmed at the shock with which the elephant rose from his knees when Colonel Howard gave the word to go on. The noble animal moved forward at a quick walk, carrying his riders above the dust, and giving them the benefit of all the air in circulation, and a much more extended view, than they could have had from any other carriage.

It was now sunset; the minarets towered up in the radiant beams which streamed over temples and trees, marking their outlines with gold, and the air rung with the shouts of the multitude and the clang of their instruments in attendance upon marriage processions and religious ceremonies. When they arrived at the commanding officer's bungalow at Secrole, Colonel Howard welcomed Charlotte as the future mistress of the mansion. They found that Mrs. Melville was in waiting to receive them. Charlotte flew to her with almost as much pleasure as she had felt in meeting her dear and excellent

uncle. In a moment after Elizabeth and Bently arrived to take their part in the general satisfaction.

“I should have been perfectly happy in this meeting,” said Flora, “if Melville had been here to enjoy it with us, but he has been sent into Oude on very disagreeable and harassing duty.”

“My dear Mrs. Melville,” interrupted Colonel Howard, who did not wish any agitating subject to be introduced at the moment, “decoit hunting is always more disagreeable than dangerous.”

Flora saw his motive for the interruption, and at the same time that the rest of the party were unacquainted with the subject which led to it; she therefore followed it no farther, and the evening passed in giving and hearing details of all that had occurred since their separation.

In the morning Bently found that his corps was actually arrived at Cawnpore and (as he had already had an extended leave of absence, which was almost expired) he should be under the necessity of proceeding to join it on the next

day but one, which was a great disappointment to all parties, as they had reckoned upon spending at least a week together. The season was now so far advanced as to render the river, from the frequency of storms, both disagreeable and dangerous; therefore Bently resolved upon marching the rest of the route, and Colonel Howard supplied him with tents for the purpose, as his own were with his corps.

Charlotte was to remain for the present with her uncle, an arrangement, which however it might distress them, neither she nor Mrs. Bently made any objection to, both being equally sensible of the impropriety of her going to Cawnpore while Fortescue remained there.

During the morning, which was spent in receiving visits from the whole station, Colonel Howard found no opportunity of giving Bently, Elizabeth, and Charlotte, all the particulars of his visit to Cawnpore, though from every person they saw they heard fragments and different editions of the story; as soon, however, as they were alone, Colonel Howard gave them the following detail, which we shall take the liberty of

reporting without either the comments or questions by which it was interrupted, and of going back a little to the first circumstances which led to such a catastrophe.

CHAPTER XI.

Falsest of woman kind ! canst thou declare,
All thy fond plighted vows—fleeting as air ?
To thy new lover hie,
Laugh o'er thy perjury,
Then in thy bosom try
What peace is there !

BURNS.

Mr. and Mrs. Marriot had for months lived in great harmony ; his study was to indulge his flighty wife in every wish of her giddy heart, and she fluttered at Cawnpore the gayest of the gay ; receiving so much attention from all, that she had not leisure to be pleased with any particular portion of it ; she took it *en masse*, without exciting rivalry by choice. This was a state which it was not difficult to foresee, would soon have a termination.

The corps to which West belonged was ordered to Cawnpore, and on its arrival, Indian etiquette demanded that the new comers should

wait upon the residents. West had not forgotten Mrs. Marriot's former behaviour to him while in Calcutta; but it was impossible, in common civility, that he could avoid waiting upon the judge, or if he did, meeting him and his lady wherever he went; and he fancied he should have a certain pleasure in showing Mrs. Marriot how perfectly indifferent he was to any conduct of hers. In this intention, on the morning after his arrival, he presented himself, with several of his brother officers, almost sure that if Mrs. Marriot did appear she would not condescend to notice him. In this, however, he was deceived; he found her in the breakfast-room, and as soon as his name was announced, she rose from the table where she was seated, expressed her pleasure at seeing him, and, contrary to his expectation, presented him to her husband as an old shipmate. West was not of a temper to retain anger in such circumstances, particularly when she added, "I hope you blame Mrs. Ponsonby for my exhibition of Calcutta dignity, not me;" and, turning to her husband, "I was naughty under her direction,

but am become so good by yours, as to ask pardon for what I have done amiss."

Both gentlemen of course made the protestations she expected.

Mr. Marriot received West, thus introduced, with even more than his usual kindness; and asked him to return to dinner with all the other officers, who had paid their visit.

In this way West, unaccustomed to look forward, in a short time suffered himself to become in a manner domesticated in the house; and it by degrees became evident to every one at the station, that his attentions were more agreeable to Mrs. Marriot than those of any other. Her husband was the last to make this remark, but when it did present itself to his mind, he tried to persuade himself that it was only friendly regard for one with whom she had been longer acquainted, kindly remonstrated with her upon the room her conduct might give for censorious remark, and delicately observed that it would be more for his happiness if she altered it.

At first she heard with great contempt what people might choose to say; she was perfectly

satisfied of the rectitude of her own intentions, (that is to say, she had never bestowed a thought upon the subject,) and had no idea of altering her conduct to please a parcel of envious malicious people; "and," she added, coaxingly, "if you are not angry with me, Marriot, I don't care what they say, or what they think."

It was in vain that her husband tried to lay before her the impossibility of female independence on such subjects, and the degradation to which she was subjecting herself, when she for a moment permitted any man to think his attention agreeable to her; having no principle of action but self-will, the language of reason was at all times abhorrent to her ears, and she ended by saying, "Now do not, Marriot, weary me by preaching; you know I like to please you, and shall try *mon possible*."

Her apparent sincerity of feeling that observation was causelessly fastened upon her, restored her husband to a degree of self-possession which he had not enjoyed since these ideas presented themselves; but distrust once awakened was not to be laid asleep, and the very next

evening, when the usual society met at a station party at the commanding officer's, it was roused to fury, by seeing that, far from altering her conduct, Harriet persisted in receiving the attentions of West with every encouragement, and that a blush of guilty consciousness passed over her cheek, when she found her husband's observation rested upon her.

The instant her rising colour caught his eye, he started as if he had trodden upon a snake; the fangs were in his heart. Her whole character, in his view, underwent a change; he no longer saw the lively amiable creature whose very want of consideration had a charm for him, but the wily syren practised to deceive. Unable to endure the sight, he shut his eyes to avoid it, ordered his carriage, and suddenly seizing the hand of his wife, told her he was ill, and must go home immediately.

Conscience whispered to her the cause of this illness, and for once she felt so abashed that she had not power to utter a syllable, and gave her hand in silence to their host, who advanced to hand her to the carriage, and to express his con-

cern for the illness of Marriot, which the burning fever of his hand proved to be real.

When they moved from the door, he turned round from the position into which he had thrown himself, with his forehead against the lining of the carriage, and, sitting upright, fiercely exclaimed, "Harriet, you have deceived me! but you shall do so no longer! either give me your word,—though," with an air of scorn, "what is it worth?—that you will see West no more, or prepare to return to your father. I will not stand tamely by, and see myself made an object of the world's contempt."

"Contempt!" re-echoed his wife, willing to seize a word, and evade an answer; "and what exposes you to contempt but your own uncontrolled passion? Have you not brought contempt upon yourself and me, by whisking off this evening in a way to bring the remarks of the whole party upon us?"

"Yes, Harriet, you have subjected me to bitter remark; I have been fooled—deceived—and by you! You, in whom I gloried!—You, whom I have treasured as my heart's delight!" He pressed his hand upon his forehead, as he

hastily thrust his head out of the window, and tears fell under his fingers; but, as if unable to bear his agony, he as hastily drew it back again: and, looking earnestly in her face, "Tell me, Harriet, that you did not blush because you felt you were deceiving me; in mercy account for that blush, and I will believe you. To tear you from my heart is past my power."

Her usual triumphant smile curled upon her lip, when she had succeeded in carrying her point, and she opened her mouth to make the required assertion; but he put his hand before her, while his frame trembled with contending emotions, "Stop, Harriet, stop, do not perjure yourself. That blush can never leave my sight, nor can I be the slave of smiles like those. I will bear it no longer!"

The carriage stopped at their own door; the bearers officiously crowded round with lights, and their unhappy master and mistress entered with feelings, which the lowest of them might have pitied. On reaching Mrs. Marriot's dressing-room, a scene of altercation took place, which it is needless to relate. Harriet, as the only tenable ground, kept firm to the position that

she was the injured person, and resisted every attempt to draw from her a promise that she would break off all intercourse with West. She trusted that the storm would blow over, and her hour of power come again; but therein she was mistaken. Two short hours had developed more of her real character than all the months which had passed since their first meeting; and though her miserable husband could not at once cease to love a creature he had adored, he saw with terror for what he had ventured his all, and returned to his own apartments, not to sleep but to fix upon the plan it was proper for him to adopt. He tried to persuade himself that his wife's conduct was the waywardness of a spoiled child, which, after a time, would give place to better feelings; and when morning dawned it found him still undecided and wakeful, though his flushed brow and burning hands showed how necessary rest was to him.

From persisting with her husband that she was the injured person, Mrs. Marriot, with the facility of a weak mind seeking for self justification, soon convinced herself that it was actually the case, and that revenge was not only par-

donable but merited. "I shall make neither submission nor concession," she wisely determined with herself; "I shall leave him to suffer for his unreasonable whims."

She retired for the night unassisted by any better counsel than her own perverse will. To bend it before the throne of grace had never been her custom; and in the situation to which she had brought herself, she had neither judgment to direct, nor experience to guide her. All night she lay resolving a thousand preposterous plans for bringing her husband to a sense of the injustice he had done her. But when morning began to dawn, and she found that he was still in his own dressing-room, she began to fancy that she had not taken the right way; but let that be as it might, she was resolved not to make the first advances, and ordered breakfast in her own apartments.

Before she had finished dressing, a chaprassy knocked at the door and desired the ayah to tell his lady, that Mr. West was below to make his salaam, before leaving cantonments. "Where is he going? for what does he go?" were the questions she asked; but to neither of them

could the servant give any answer, but the usual shrug, and "What does your slave know?" Exasperated at the idea that his sudden departure was an act of her husband's, she earnestly exclaimed, "Stop him, stop him. I shall see him before he goes. Tell him I desire he will wait;" and hastily finishing her toilette she ran to the drawing-room, but he was gone, and his card to take leave lay on the table.

"Where is your master?" she demanded of the sirdar bearer. "Has he seen Mr. West?"

"No, no, my sahib went to court an hour ago," was the answer, "and West sahib is to march this moment. The sepoy and all are ready."

"Marriot has gone out, and West is going! I shall know what this means," thought Mrs. Marriot, as, utterly regardless of any thing but her own will, she ran out, crossed the road which divided her grounds from his compound, and saw him in the very act of driving his buggy from his own door. At sight of her he stopt, but without giving him time to alight, she sprung into the carriage, while wonder held

him mute, and demanded without giving him time to speak, "Where are you going, West? and why do you leave Cawnpore? has Marriot ordered it?"

More and more astonished, "No," he answered; "I am ordered off at an hour's warning, as I was the first for duty to escort treasure."

Abashed by an answer which instantly placed the precipitate violence of her conduct in the strongest light, she inquired, timidly, "And have I really been mistaken in your journey? and has Marriot nothing to do with it?"

"No, Mrs. Marriot, on my honour, nothing," returned West; and then, as if at once awakened to the nature of her suspicions, he continued, anxiously, but respectfully, "let me have the satisfaction to see you safely home; I trust that you may not suffer from exposure to the sun, or your kind interest in my fate."

"No," said the infatuated Harriet, "that can never be; wherever I go, after what has passed, I can never return to Marriot, and confess that he was right, and I was wrong;" and she threw herself back in the carriage in a passion of tears.

The drum beat, the horse accustomed to the sound, moved on, while West deeply affected by the sorrow he witnessed, tried to soothe his wretched companion, who was not so utterly dead to all feeling of moral right and wrong, as not to have a sense of the misery into which she had cast herself. For an instant she seemed as if, like the repentant prodigal, she would return and confess all, but pride, which fills the mind in proportion as better feelings leave it, gained the mastery, and when West drew the rein to direct his horse towards the home she had forsaken, she put her hand on his arm; "No, drive on; I shall never return, what does it signify to me what is said? I shall not hear it."

West, though he had indulged himself in Mrs. Marriot's society, and had in pure idleness and want of occupation, paid her unremitting attention, had certainly never contemplated such an issue; and was, therefore, at first with the natural feeling of a mind not hardened by habitual guilt, more shocked than gratified by the step she had taken. But vanity, which casts a bandage over the eyes of men in

such circumstances, suggested that the very enormity of her crime was proof of the magnitude of her regard for him ; and what men of the world call honour, helped to persuade him, that it would be dishonourable to leave a creature who had thrown herself upon his protection. Fatal and miserable delusion, which leaves the conduct of one human being at the mercy of another, as worthless, as weak. The hour of passion is seldom the hour of conscience. But let those recollect, who then slight it as a friend, that the time must come, when they will be obliged to hear it as an enemy.

CHAPTER XII.

The hand of the reaper
Takes the ears that are hoary,
But the voice of the weeper
Wails manhood in glory.

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

AT the usual hour, unfit as he was for such exertion, Marriot went out to his court, to give sentence on a trial for life and death, which was that day to come before him. A native of some respectability had in a fit of jealous fury murdered his wife, and afterwards her mother; who unfortunately meeting him while the bloody poinard was still reeking in his hand, had boldly declared the innocence of her daughter.

Marriot felt a dreadful interest in this trial, which increased the fever that preyed upon him. Many witnesses were examined, and the whole charge clearly made out against the prisoner, who during the trial stood at first re-

solutely listening; and, far from seeming to feel either fear for himself or repentance for his acts, gloried in the ample revenge he had taken, and, pointing to the spots upon his clothes, muttered, "Blood can wash out shame;" but when in the further course of the investigation, the innocence of his unhappy wife was proved beyond a doubt, and the cause of his mistake fully explained, the dormant fiend was roused; remorse seized him, he tore his beard with his hands, scattered dust upon his head, and uttering a shriek which rung through the court house, made a spring from the earth, and dashed himself with fearful violence upon the ground, where he lay as if life had parted in the agony. In an instant all was confusion; some drew back as if they expected to see the spirit of evil claim his prey, and others called for water. "Remove his irons," said Mr. Marriot, overpowered by sympathy which made him forget the murderer in the wretched sufferer. "Send to the hospital and get a doctor to bleed him." The irons were taken off, and water thrown on his face; still he lay to all appearance dead;

when the natives to avoid contact retreated further and further, clearing a space round him, and many, thinking nothing more was to be done, left the house. The judge, exhausted by the intensity of his feeling, sunk back upon his seat, and waited the arrival of the doctor, to know whether he had yet a sentence to pass upon the wretched culprit; or whether a higher sentence had gone forth against him, and he had already appeared at another tribunal to "give account of the deeds done in the body." The native officers whispered apart in groups, looking now and then from the judge to the inanimate body before him. Strange as it may seem, the criminal appeared at once to pass from death to life, and with energy almost supernatural, started upon his feet, rushed from the court, and in an instant threw himself into one of the large open wells so common in the upper provinces, where he fell with a plunge which brought conviction to every mind that his fate was sealed.

"It is all over," said the officers of the court.

“ My work is ended,” said the jailor, gathering up the empty irons.

“ That well is spoiled for this day’s use,” said another ; and every man began spitting as he passed it, unwilling to swallow the polluted exhalation.

Mr. Marriot had still the painful duty to perform, of giving orders that the lowest caste people (who will alone officiate in such cases) should get up the body, and gibbet it in front of the dwelling where the unhappy creature had committed his crimes.

“ After such a scene as this, to what am I returning ?” thought Marriot, as he threw himself into his palanquin. “ Have I, like that miserable wretch, sacrificed my wife to an accursed imagination ?” Two or three times he called to his bearers to go faster before he reached his own house, and he strained his eye to catch a sight of it, as if he would anticipate the reception he was to meet with.

“ Tell your lady,” he said to his sirdar bearer, who in silence carried his palanquin *escrutoir* to his dressing-room before him, while the rest

crowded behind, "that I am ill, and would see her."

"Sahib," said the bearer, unable to go on, as if the tidings he had to tell had quickened even native apathy.

"Do you hear?" said his master, throwing himself upon his couch, "go instantly; since I cannot—"

"Our lady is not here," said the bearer, timidly; "she is gone."

His master started upon his feet; "Gone! When? where? to her father? gone?"

"Yes, gone off when you went to court, with Mr. West in his buggy."

The unfortunate husband heard no more; he fell upon the spot as if thunder had struck him. Medical attendance was instantly procured, and he was put to bed in a state of stupefaction, which left little hopes that he would ever recover. His medical attendants had used the lancet in vain, and applied brushes before he showed symptoms of returning animation. When he did, his intellect was so clouded by the delirium of fever that burnt in his veins,

that he exhausted his little remaining strength by incessant talking.

The very day of Mrs. Marriot's departure, Colonel Howard arrived at the station, and as soon as these unhappy circumstances were made known to him, he hastened to the bedside of his suffering friend, who was not in a state to recognise him, or, indeed, any one but his bearer, who had been about his person ever since his arrival in the country, and whom in his wildest moments he did not forget. It was in vain Colonel Howard tried to quiet his poor friend; he heard him not.

Marriot raved of the trial, of Harriet, and of West; the bloody poinard seemed to float before his eyes, and like Macbeth he groped about in ineffectual efforts to catch it. "Strike him!" he exclaimed to his astonished bearers; "let me pin to the ground the serpent who glides into men's houses to steal their happiness!"

"Sahib," said the bearer, vainly struggling to keep his master in bed, "there is no snake here."

"Yes," he returned, "and that wily cocka-

trice that tears my heart;" while with a desperate effort he tore off the covering of his bed.

In this way he continued for three days, as the high fits of his fever came on, struggling and denouncing vengeance on his betrayers; and when these gave place to the low intervals, expostulating with, and entreating his faithless wife to return and have pity upon his misery. Colonel Howard watched by him night and day; the doctor was also as assiduous as his other duties would permit. On the third night, after having slumbered more quietly than he had done since the commencement of his illness, the patient waked, and fixed his eyes upon his friend seated by him, with so much calmness, that Colonel Howard felt that reason had returned; he took his hand in silence. Marriot returned the pressure, and spoke in a low though distinct voice, "My friend! I have still one; I know all; it is here," laying his hand on his heart, "my time is short, and I would do what ought to be done."

"My dear friend," said Colonel Howard, still holding his hand, "why fatigue yourself by

talking? You are refreshed by that sleep, and will be better in the morning."

"No," said Marriot; "my time is come; take my last instructions."

The doctor made a sign, which intimated to Colonel Howard that he was in the right; and repressing his own feelings, he took writing materials from a side table, and seating himself near his dying friend, prepared to take down his wishes. The doctor withdrew to another apartment, and Marriot, who seemed to have been collecting all his strength for the effort, dictated his wishes in a clear though low voice. He trembled, and hesitated as he named his unhappy wife, and for an instant covered his face with his handkerchief. Colonel Howard at the moment lifted his heart in prayer for him.

"Time presses," whispered Marriot, and again he proceeded.

When Colonel Howard had finished, he read aloud what he had written, at his friend's request. "It is enough," he said; "send to her whatever I was proud to call hers. She may come to want these things; and if that time does

come, promise me, my friend," and he grasped the Colonel's hand with convulsive energy, "that you will try to prevent her from falling lower." The effort almost choked him, and he burst into tears—the last which he ever shed.

The doctor was called from the other room to witness the deed just executed, and he saw from the change which had taken place, that his patient had not many hours to suffer. Fever returned with increased force, and pursued retreating life to its last citadel, the heart, which it was soon forced to quit, and morning dawned upon the cold and still remains, from which life had been so cruelly driven.

Colonel Howard wept like a child, when he gazed upon the benign countenance of one whose last hours had been spent in providing for his murderer. "Surely," he said, "if her heart is not harder than the nether millstone, this will bring her to repentance. O that she were within my power at this moment; that I might sound in her ears the last words those lips ever spoke; that I might tell her the last tears those eyes ever shed were for her misery and

her shame ! Surely a creature so young, and so fair, cannot bear a heart so impenetrable ; but I shall write to her, lost as she is. I shall discharge my duty to my friend, and try to bring her to a sense of her conduct ;” and with the unburied body of his friend by him, he began to perform his painful task. He had loved Harriet Panton, in the midst of her follies, with the affection of a near relative, and she had been the friend and companion of his nieces. Whence had she fallen ? to what had she sunk herself ? Every thought, every word, only increased the bitterness of his feelings towards her. He threw down the pen, and paced the room in agitation which it was difficult to master. But the sacred presence of the dead, which sets the seal of absurdity, if not impiety, upon every angry feeling, brought his thoughts into a better train ; and he resumed his pen to urge, to entreat, the lost one to return ere it was yet too late, and she had made shipwreck of her hopes hereafter, as she had done those of her mortal life.

Having discharged this first duty to his departed friend, Colonel Howard gave the neces-

sary orders for committing his body to the grave. When, in conformity with his promise to send such things to Mrs. Marriot, he was preparing to put a seal upon her jewel-box, "Stop one moment," said the ayah, "and put in this, the first necklace, I have often heard my mistress tell my master, she ever got from him, and the last one she wore, the night before she went."

Colonel Howard let it fall from his hand as he recollected Charlotte Percy's letter, giving an account of those pearls; he considered them the seal of his poor friend's fate. "Yes," he exclaimed aloud, "mercenary and worthless woman! there lies thy purchase-money, and it bought a broken heart and an untimely grave for the generous and unsuspecting giver."

Before sunset, all the European inhabitants of Cawnpore met to render the last office of friendship to a man who had been universally loved and respected. All the better class of natives were also in respectful attendance, with the officers of the court and his own servants. The crowd which followed was immense. Some, as is always the case, actuated by idle curiosity,

and others out of respect to the memory of the "Just Judge," as he was called by those about him. Every soldier in cantonments was present on this occasion, as if to mark their sense of West's conduct.

In their way to the European burying-ground, the procession passed by the lonely dwelling where the victims of jealousy had met their fate. Not a living creature was to be seen near it, but the bare-necked vultures, which on the roof whetted their beaks, in concert with the chains of the condemned which rudely creaked as the body swayed in the hot wind. The officers of the court looked from the body to the coffin, and from the coffin to the body, with the same air of scrutiny which they had used when regarding the judge and the culprit on the day trial; and they whispered apart as they had done then, and made comments upon the singular sympathy which existed between the fates of two such very opposite individuals.

CHAPTER XIII.

To be weak is miserable,
Doing or suffering.

MILTON.

WEST, though as unthinking as his reprobate companion, was not altogether as heartless, and could not help at times being deeply affected by a sense of the guilt into which he was plunged. Journeying through the jungles, he heard none of the wily arguments of infidel authors, to drown the "still small voice;" he saw nature beautiful in all her works, and felt that he had violated her order; even a confused suspicion crossed his mind that, merciful as he believed God to be, and ready to forgive human infirmities, this was something to be punished; and the more he thought, and the further he removed from the haunts of civilized life, the plainer did the evil of his conduct appear. Restless, and awakened, he fancied that

his own servants, and the sepoys under his command, regarded him with near and painful severity, from which he tried in vain to escape. This sadness, which did not always escape the observation of Harriet, mortified her vanity, and rendered her so peevish, that even West, willing as he was to overlook all, and bear with all, could not be blind to it. Whenever the misery of his mind prevented his endeavours to amuse her, she reproached him with what she had done and what she had left solely for his sake ; forgetting that she had mercilessly sacrificed his feelings in the first instance by her marriage, and his reputation and moral rectitude in the second, to the mere indulgence of her own will ; and now that she had enthralled him past his power of extrication, she, like a fiend, upbraided him with the misery into which she had plunged them both.

One evening, when West, wearied with repressing his bitter feelings, had stolen out and left Mrs. Marriot alone in the tent, she was surprised by the appearance of a messenger, who entered and presented a letter and a package addressed to

her. Taking the letter hastily from his hand, she easily recognised the hand-writing of Colonel Howard; and having a conviction that the contents could not be very agreeable, as soon as she ascertained from the bearer that it came from Cawnpore, she laid it down, dismissed him, and began immediately to inspect the package, which the messenger told her he had been charged by her ayah to give into her own hands. She found it contained several changes of apparel which her provident domestic, on receiving orders from Colonel Howard to pack up her mistress's things for her use, had thought proper to send, willing by such a needful attention to retain her favour, when she found that there would still be means of rewarding her services. Mrs. Marriot then took up the letter, broke the seal, and read :

“ I have to inform you, that at three o'clock this morning your excellent husband was released from the sufferings your disgraceful desertion brought upon him. He died the victim of your shameless conduct. Your ingratitude pierced him to the heart. Lost and sunk as

you are, if you could at this moment see, as I see, those eyes, fixed in the calm of death, which a few hours ago overflowed with burning tears for your shame; if you could see the benign smile on those cold lips, which last moved in prayer to God for your forgiveness; surely you would sorrow for the ruin you have wrought, and repent in dust and ashes. That is all that is left to you; all that your longest life can accomplish.

“ But I must not, even in my just indignation, forget the sacred promise I made in his last moments to him who was your husband; *then* he thought not of himself, of his unmerited suffering; he only thought of saving you from the misery into which you have plunged yourself. He has confirmed your marriage-settlements, ample are they are, and secured to you the means of living in affluence, so that want may not tempt you to continue the life you have chosen. Let his generosity, let his voice which speaks to you by me, stop you in the downward path of guilt. Return, Harriet, as you value your own soul! If you have a par-

ticke of humanity in your bosom, if you are susceptible of one emotion of gratitude, if you hope for a moment's peace here, or forgiveness hereafter, return; only come back a penitent, and I will receive you, and I will place you where the world's reproach shall not trouble your efforts to gain pardon from your God."

Selfish as was the heart to which this appeal was made, it was not altogether without effect; as by the power of friction on ice, some natural sparks of feeling were emitted, and Mrs. Marriot shed bitter tears over her husband's death and his kindness towards her; but again the evil spirit of self-willed justification, which is ever ready to exert its influence against salutary sorrow in irreligious minds, whispered, "If he had not been so unreasonably angry; if he had not shut himself up in his own room, all this would not have happened. It was his own fault, he was more to blame than I am, and I dare say he was sorry for it." Like all wayward people under the goading influence of self-conviction, she sought to look abroad for the evils which were all within, and had recourse to the

wretched assistance of anger to combat remorse. "And Colonel Howard too, by what right does he dictate to me. No, no; whatever I have done, and whatever I may think, I shall not give him or others the triumph to suppose that I repent. And what good would it do? Would my making myself more miserable set things as they were before? And what have I done, but what hundreds have done, when there was no such fuss made about it? It was his own passionate temper put Marriot in a fever!" but the utterance of the lie almost choked her; she made a convulsive gasp, and burst into tears—vain, unproductive tears, which coming from a soiled and hardened source, promised neither repentance nor amendment. She wept on to give vent to the storm of passion which domineered over her; and the only resolution she made was, for the present to take no notice to West of the letter she had just received; at some further period, when she felt more able to speak on the subject with composure, she would tell him all that it was of any consequence for him to know; and in pursuance of this determi-

nation, she held the letter over a candle, and throwing it on the ground before her, watched the progress of the flames as they reduced it to ashes. When the last spark expired, which consumed this record of the fate of her unhappy husband, she felt a pang shoot through her heart; but, as if she could extinguish it by action, as she did the dust of the letter on which she set her foot, she got up, and with the help of rose water, tried to wash out the traces of her tears.

West scrambled on, unheeding where; his only object was by fatigue to bring back sleep which had lately left him. His orderly, as was his custom, followed at a distance, and on their return to the little encampment, seeing the servants and bearers earnestly talking round the newly arrived messenger, stepped forward to hear the news, and with the anxiety of all in his situation, whether black or white, to be the first bearers of tidings, be they good or bad, instantly returned, and told his master, "Judge Marriot Sahib is dead, and buried two days ago."

West again turned from the tent, and the night was far spent before he re-appeared. When he did, it was with looks so wild and haggard, that the war within might be traced there. The generale beat, the tents were struck, and all were on the move. When he and Mrs. Marriot met under the wan light of the setting moon, a glance told each what the other had suffered, and by tacit consent no word was spoken upon the subject. But after a few days, when change had weakened these feelings with Mrs. Marriot, her vacant mind again began to sigh after amusement, and to be weary of the melancholy into which West sunk every day deeper and deeper.

One night, when, after a long hot day and a toilsome march in the morning, they sat silently looking out at the tent door upon the arid and barren waste before them, in different places intersected by deep ravines, and at a little distance on the right, bounded by very thick jungle, seen occasionally by the flashes of lightning, so common in the hot winds, Mrs. Marriot pushed back her chair and went into the hut, saying, in

a voice of a reproach, "It was not in this way, West, you used to entertain me ; it was not in this way you sat and looked the last night we were at Cawnpore."

"No, Harriet," he was upon the point of saying, "for I had not then a sense of guilt to oppress me;" but he gave no utterance to the thought, and only answered, "I cannot help being anxious about such a large treasure, in a country so infested by thieves."

"Ah, West! that does not deceive me. I see how it is; I wish I had taken your advice to return in the beginning," she said, bitterly.

In this too he might have accorded, but he only said, "You wrong me, Harriet. I must really go and see if the sentries are upon the alert. I have neglected it too long in anxiety for your entertainment."

"You shall not go now, West; I tell you I will not be left alone. I dare say the sentries are as much on the alert as any sentries need to be."

"Harriet, Harriet, surely you would not have me fail in my duty."

“It is your first duty to attend to me, and the night is so dark, and the jackalls howl so abominably, that I am afraid to be left alone.”

“These jackalls do howl,* and they seem to answer each other,” observed West; “I wish all may be well.”

The words had hardly passed his lips when the report of muskets announced his worst fears realized. “Ruined! totally ruined!” he said, “let me go,” as she attempted to detain him, “let me die in my disgrace.”

He rushed to the door of the tent, which he had no sooner reached than he was forcibly seized by several stout fellows, who, stripping off his sash, tied his arms behind him, and placing a gag upon his mouth, carried him into the tent, and laid him, bound as he was, before Mrs. Marriot, at the same time ordering her and the servant to keep silence on pain of instant death. One, who appeared to be the chief, advanced towards her, and assured her, that if she made no noise no harm would befall her, but that if

* Thieves commonly imitate the howling of jackalls, and give signals to each other by means of these cries.

she attempted to move, her being a woman would not protect her; and taking West's sword from his side, he broke it through the centre, and threw the splinters at her feet; then, leaving four of his followers, assassin looking ruffians, fully armed though but scantily clothed, to guard the prisoners, he proceeded to direct the operations without.

The treasure had been as usual, upon the carts which conveyed it, stationed in the centre of the little encampment, under the eye of the sentries. At sunset the sepoy had cooked their curry as was their custom, in the open air, and after eating it laid down to sleep, fatigued by their toilsome march of the morning, until the drum at eight o'clock should call them to quarters; they had with the most reprehensible carelessness piled their arms near them, at no great distance from one of the ravines by which the ground was broken. The sky was covered with clouds, as is sometimes the case before a violent storm, and the darkness was only broken by continued flashes of lightning, which were, however, too distant and too common to disturb

the repose of those who slumbered on the dry ground under the cooled air which lightning always sets in motion.

One of the soldier's wives sat by the sleeping group nursing her infant, and saw with terror, which palsied every effort to rouse any of the men to her assistance, that a wolf with eyes intently fixed upon her was stealing cautiously towards her. Every flash of lightning, as it came, showed him nearer and nearer; she strained the infant closer and closer to her bosom, but her tongue cleaved to the roof of her mouth, dried up by fear, and she had no power to utter a sound until the wolf, secure of his distance, with one spring seized her child, and wrenched it from her arms. A shriek burst from her lips which might have roused the dead, and brought the sleepers instantly on their feet to demand the cause; when it was known, they ran towards the ravine, where another flash showed a glimpse of the wolf with his prey, in the act of descending, and baffled by the darkness of the night, they scattered in different directions to pursue him. Then it was that the decoites burst from their

concealment, possessed themselves in an instant of the piled arms, and fired the shots upon the sentries which had too late apprised West of what had taken place.

When the chief came from the tent where he had left his prisoners, he found the battle fought and the victory won. The sentries, who alone had arms in their hands with which to make any resistance, after firing their pieces, were literally cut to pieces before they could re-load. They had to contend with the decoites, a formidable band of resolute and well armed marauders, perfectly acquainted with the nature of the service in which they had embarked. It appeared that they had followed for several days in the rear of the treasure party, and watched their advantage of ground and of weather before making their onset, and one of their numbers had, as a faquir,* ascertained every thing in the camp which it was requisite for them to know. As soon as they were certain that there was no danger of a surprise, their chief made a signal,

* Religious beggar.

and several horses were brought up from the ravine. These animals, like their masters, appeared to be acquainted with the life they led, and approached with a quick though noiseless pace, choosing their steps and scrambling like goats over the broken ground. Upon them the treasure was placed, while a strong guard stood over the unarmed sepoy to prevent interruption or escape. Each horse's bridle was taken by one of the troop, who, as soon as the whole of the treasure was thus disposed of, ran before these sure-footed animals the same way they came, crossed the ravine and mounted on the other side, where the lightning showed a number of horsemen in waiting; each seized a treasure-horse by the bridle, and clapping spurs to his own, crossed over the plain towards the jungle, where the noise of their feet was soon lost to the ear, taking care to leave nothing behind them which could be the means of retarding their escape or betraying their route. The guards kept watch over their prisoners until they had given the horsemen time to get to a considerable dis-

tance, and then disappeared at one instant in different directions, leaving no trace behind.

As soon as the terror occasioned by their presence had subsided amongst the servants, they unbound their master, who, well knowing the public disgrace which must follow, in his heart cursed the hour in which he had first seen the miserable Harriet, or suffered himself to be entangled by her wiles. He rose slowly from the ground, and after a moment's gloomy silence, ordered all the servants to leave the tent. "Fool that I was! infatuated fool!" he exclaimed, "to be restrained from doing what I knew to be my duty! to bring ruin upon myself and shame upon all connected with me! But I can escape from it; there is one way still;" and throwing himself into a chair he sunk back, and pressed his hands upon his eyes. "What! do you talk of escape, West? where do you think of going?" inquired Mrs. Marriot, soothingly, as, seizing his hands, she uncovered his face, "and at all events wherever you go, take me with you."

"Harriet, Harriet, you know not what you ask," he returned, with emotion which baffled all

control." I have taken you from honour and peace and happiness, and have plunged you in despair and infamy and misery, and would you go still farther with me? Would you go to the grave? I have no other refuge on earth to hide me from contempt. The time is come, when we must part."

"Part," she re-echoed, "and for what! I shall never part from you."

"You know not what you say," he returned; "I am ruined past hope, and must be dismissed by the sentence of a court-martial."

Mrs. Marriot was for an instant alarmed by the vehemence of his manner, but unable to comprehend the depth of his feelings, she imagined that it could be but a momentary burst of passion, which would quickly subside, and she answered with a gaiety which was that moment foreign to her mind, "Don't talk of parting, West. What am I to do without you?"

"True, Harriet, true! I have left you neither a home nor a name."

"I have told you before," she returned quickly, "and I tell you again, I care neither

for homes nor names, which the world lays so much stress upon. I have done too much to gratify my own inclination to care what people say now; and if you are really afraid of a court-martial, let us go down to Calcutta, and take our passage for Europe before there is time to stop us;" and seeing that he was going to speak, "do not interrupt me; I must now tell you that poor Marriot, the last night of his life, made a will, by which he confirmed to me my marriage-settlement, a lack of rupees, and much more besides, so that we shall have more than enough to live very comfortably in England."

"Did I hear aright?" said West, rising and striding to the middle of the tent, where he set his back against the tent pole, "live in comfort! me live in comfort! after having seduced the wife of my friend, my kind, hospitable, confiding friend, and bringing him in sorrow to an early grave; betraying my duty and forfeiting my honour as a soldier; and low as I have fallen, and disgraced as is my name, and blighted as are my prospects, is it still proposed to me to sink lower, and live and fatten upon the remains of him my

treachery has murdered?" and kneeling down for perhaps the first time in his life, and spreading out his hands to Heaven, "O, God! save me from this accumulation of infamy! but I will save myself, there is one way!" he started upon his feet in desperation, drew one of his loaded pistols from under his pillow, and disappeared by the opposite door of the tent. The truth flashed upon the mind of his miserable companion; she rose from her seat with the intention of following him, but her limbs refused to second her wishes, and, uttering a long loud piercing shriek, she fell upon the ground, not insensible but absolutely powerless; and in this state she remained for a few seconds, until the dreaded report of the pistol took from her all sense of feeling, and sent an immortal soul, naked in its unrepented guilt and unforgiven crimes, into the presence of a holy and sin-hating God.

When sensibility returned, it was to awaken the tortures of remorse; conscience told her that this was her work; had it not been for her, West would never have fallen into such an abyss. "It was I who insisted upon accompanying him on

this ill-fated journey. He did not even propose it. No;" and she wept louder, "when but this night he wanted to secure the treasure, it was I who prevented him, but," and she rose upright at the thought, "why should not I follow him? what have I to do here now? no one will associate with me, no one will receive me! there is not one house in India to which I can go! why should I be afraid?" She took the laudanum bottle from West's travelling medicine chest, and pouring the contents into a cup, raised it to her lips, then as suddenly dashing it with violence upon the ground, she frantically exclaimed, speaking aloud, as if addressing some one, "I cannot, I cannot! I fear to die! why should I die? I can live, and I shall live. O, to die is so horrible!" and she burst into a loud hysteric laugh.

Her only female attendant was an ignorant helpless native woman, whom West had picked up on the march, and who had perhaps never seen an European lady before. Her idea was, that her unhappy mistress was suddenly possessed by evil spirits, and she turned on her

steps to the other servants to consult with them on the best means of driving them out. Meanwhile her mistress continued to laugh and to sing at the pitch of her voice, while any power of exertion remained; and when completely exhausted, sunk into a kind of stupor.

From this state of stupefaction Mrs. Marriot was first roused by a clap of thunder, which shook the ground, and a gust of wind which tore the tent pins from the earth, and wrapped the tent together like a piece of crumpled paper, leaving her exposed to the fury of the tempest, which had now come in all its power.

“The palanquin! the palanquin,” shouted the bearers, as they strove to disentangle it from the loose canvas, which, borne by the wind in an opposite direction, completely enveloped the body of their unfortunate master, which lay extended on the ground where he had discharged his pistol, as soon as he was without the door of his tent. Mrs. Marriot with the instinctive activity of fear, crept into the palanquin, and drew the doors as if to shut out the storm, while

the servants gathered round it, to prevent its being carried away by the wind, which raised the sand in such clouds, that the sheeted lightning streaming through the darkened air, seemed like the fire and smoke of a city sacked, while the continued thunder, like the quick discharge of artillery, heightened the resemblance, and the lashing of the trees and howling of the wind joined like the shouting of the assailants. Every instant the storm seemed to roll nearer, and apprehensive and superstitious from the preceding events of that disastrous night, they almost expected it to break on their devoted heads. Another tremendous peal rattled overhead, and the blasting lightning flew on its sulphureous wings, tainting the air, and obliging all within its influence to cover their almost blinded eyes. Before vision had quite recovered its power, the group exposed in such a night became sensible of increased heat, and when they were able to look up, saw that the fallen tent had been struck, and was now in a blaze, throwing its crackling sparks in the air.

The fire was kept up by the tent poles, and some of the furniture, which was carried along by the canvas and ropes in which it was entangled, and which now formed a funeral pile, which soon reduced to ashes the body of the unhappy West.

When morning broke, nothing remained upon the ground but the empty treasure carts, the untended cattle, the palls * of the men, scattered where the wind had carried them in every direction, and the bodies of the newly dead, the bearers having taken up the palanquin with the intention of seeking some shelter for its houseless inmate.

After their morning devotions, the first care of the Mussulman sepoys was to inter the bodies of their slain brethren as prescribed by their prophet, while the Hindoos cut wood to consume the mortal remains of their gallant rajepoots,† according to the custom of their

* Small tents of the sepoys.

† Fighting caste of Hindoos.

caste; and having performed these duties they straggled into the nearest cantonments, each to give the best account he could of his own share in last night's disastrous affair.

END OF VOL. II.

